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["THIS IS MY BROTHER, MISS MORTIMER. WHY, TOM, WHAT IS IT?" FOR HER BROTHER HAD SLUNK BACK FROM THE SLENDER FORM.]

## A FLOWER OF FATE.

### CHAPTER VI.

"ANICE, here is a letter from your brother. He is coming down to day."

"Is he?" observed Lady Anice, carelessly. She was standing before her long mirror twisting and turning her dainty figure to see how a lovely robe of ivory satin (which had just arrived from Paris, and which her maid was trying on) appeared in her eyes.

"Dunmoor is much troubled," sighed the Countess, sinking into a chair. "What dress is this, Anice?" she added anxiously, as she beheld the costly satin.

"One from Roderick's? Dunmoor is troubled, you say, mamma. Dear me, that is extraordinary! I never knew Dunmoor anything but troubled."

"I wish to have a chat with you," the Countess said. "Can you give me five minutes?"

Lady Anice almost stamped her foot in her vexation.

"Take off this dress, Taylor, and give me some sort of wrap. I do wish, mamma, you would let me know when you are coming to worry me!"

The mother's faded face grew touched with crimson at this remark before the maid. She said nothing, however, and waited while the garment was lifted from her daughter's form and deposited on a couch.

"Now, mamma," demanded Lady Anice, wrapping a voluminous pale-blue silk peignoir about her, looking exceedingly pretty and cross, "what is it?"

For answer the Countess opened a letter and drew forth an enclosure.

"Read that!" she said.

Lady Anice ran her eye over it, and frowned deeply.

"Dunmoor is simply a disagreeable prig," she exclaimed. "Are my bills heavier than his, I should like to know? And what on earth is there to prevent his setting these paltry few?"

"Paltry few, Anice!" exclaimed the Countess, aghast. "My dear child, remember Roderick's account alone is nearly a thou-

sand! Your extravagance is terrible. You know our condition. You know——"

"I know that because I happen to have a father who has plunged his whole estate in debt I am to be denied everything!"

"Anice, that is not true. You know why the estates are so impoverished. To speak of your poor father, lying now stricken down with paralysis, is worse than cruel—it is a sin. You have had everything you want. Do you stint yourself? Look at my wardrobe! All old dresses remade, whilst you, with the terrible bill hanging over your head unpaid, have even ordered another costly gown from Roderick's, and wear it without a single thought or care. Anice, you are very wrong!"

Lady Anice tapped the floor impatiently. "Why did my father impoverish us so?" she muttered. "We may have birth, but we are after all only beggars."

The Countess looked worn and weary. She passed her white hand over her brow.

"What need to return to the past?" she said gently. "Honour, Anice, came first in all to your father. To clear his father's memory he sacrificed himself."

"And others."  
"Who feels this sacrifice?" asked the mother, quietly. "Do you? Have I not neglected my poor husband to give you every pleasure in my power? While your brother is striving with all his might to uphold our position by strict economy you have done nothing to help us; indeed, only add your share to the burden."

"That will do, mamma," cried Lady Anice, rising abruptly. "I am sick of reproaches. I have nothing else all day long."

"Anice, are you utterly heartless?"

Lady Anice shrugged her shoulders.

"I can read riddles well," she observed coldly. "Rex Darnley has been talking to you, and abusing me as usual. You are always discontented with me, mamma, when Rex is near at hand."

"You are mistaken, Anice," the Countess answered. "Rex has said nothing to me on the subject of your extravagance. How could he? He knows nothing."

Lady Anice was intent on examining her dress.

"Is this all you wanted to say?" she asked, as her mother paused.

"I wish to warn you that Dunsmoor will be here."

"Well, I am glad of it. I shall soon make him understand there is to be no nonsense about my extravagance. What are a few pretty dresses to the thousands papa spends on redeeming the estate; and as you are all so anxious I should make a good marriage I must dress well. Now, mamma, if you are finished Taylor had better return. This gown requires some alterations, and I must wear it at the ball next Friday."

The Countess folded the letter she held, and walked to the door in silence.

When alone Lady Anice stamped her foot in anger, and disfigured her pretty countenance with a pouting frown.

"It is too disgusting!" she muttered. "mamma is always like this when Rex is near. Rex—ugh! I positively hate him. I can't forgive him in a hurry for taking the Earl away last night just to walk home with those wretched low actresses. I got it out of Mr. Motte they did walk home with them, and now mamma will go and tell Rex all about my bills, and he will set Dunsmoor on not to pay them. He must pay them, for I can't, and Rodrick is growing quite insolent!"

Meanwhile down in the village Vera was spending a quiet day. Maggie Delane had gone out for a drive with Mr. Motte, greatly to the amazement, and not a little to the scandal, of Mrs. Watson's neighbours. There was no rehearsal—the success of last night had induced Mr. De Mortimer to keep the same piece in the bill, so Vera was free to do as she liked.

All day she was thoughtful and sad and strangely weary. The great mental excitement she had endured that morning, as she rushed forward and snatched a fellow-creature from death, had passed away and left her quite fatigued. The face of the man she had saved was always before her, and the thought of his crime and the man he had wronged haunted her.

She could not push the idea of fear from her mind when the thought of Rex Darnley came. His dark, stern, handsome countenance, his quiet, resolute voice and manner, all struck a chill when she pictured the poor, weak criminal acknowledging his wrong. She tried to forget the incident, but could not; and when Amy brought up a cup of afternoon tea she broke into a hurried conversation to wake herself from her troubled dream.

"How pleased you look, Miss Watson. You have quite a colour," she said.

Amy smiled.

"I am happy," she answered, softly, "because mother is happy—her baby is at home."

Vera looked up inquiringly.

"My brother Tom!" explained Amy, "on

baby and pet. He comes very seldom. I want you to see him."

"I shall be glad," Vera said, slowly. "How nice it sounds to have a brother! I knew what a joy a mother was"—she looked into the glowing fire—"but except for her I have always been alone, I think."

"You never had any brothers or sisters?" Amy asked.

Vera shook her head.

"No, mother always said I was her only joy—the one star that came to brighten the darkness of her life; and yet it is strange sometimes I seem to remember a boy, a playmate, I used to call a brother. I suppose it was all a dream."

Amy was silent—she was thinking.

"You are not happy after all," Vera said, suddenly. "There is a troubled look in your eyes. What is the matter?"

Amy smiled faintly, then her lips trembled. "I am troubled," she replied, hurriedly, "but I keep it from mother. It is about Tom. He has something on his mind—he pretends he hasn't, but I know; and he is not well. He has been in bed all day, with a headache he calls it. It would be nearer the truth if he called it heartache."

Vera rose and kissed the other.

"Don't vex yourself, dear," she whispered. "Perhaps, after all, it is only your fancy."

Amy shook her head despairingly.

"He is not a bit like himself. As a rule he is so handsome, and he looks so drawn and old. I can't understand it."

Vera's heart suddenly seemed to stand still.

"What is your brother like?" she asked.

"Will you let me bring him upstairs, and introduce him to you?" cried Amy.

"If you like."

Amy fitted away, and Vera stood still gazing at the fire, feeling strangely excited. In another moment Amy had returned.

"This is my brother Tom, Miss Mortimer. Why, Tom, what is it?"

For Tom Watson had slunk back from the slender form standing on the hearthrug with outstretched hand, the firelight gleaming on the red gold of her hair, and a pure, lovely face. It was his angel of the morning, and he felt he could not meet her.

"It is in the doormat," said Vera, coming gallantly to his rescue. "We catch our feet in it every time we come in. How do you do, Mr. Watson? I am pleased to know you."

Tom took the hand, and pressed it to his lips, while Amy went to examine the doormat.

Some strange intuition had led Vera to guess the truth, but even as she did so her heart sank. Amy and her sweet-faced mother had given her such kind words, had treated her in a way that the girl was rarely treated, and it was for their sakes she grieved. What a wreck to their happy home if the truth came out, or Rex Darnley refused to pardon!

"You have neuralgia, Mr. Watson," she said, quietly, while her thoughts were going on; "everybody seems to suffer from it now. What is the matter, Miss Watson?"

"I can't find anything wrong with this rug, but I will fetch a light and then see."

As they were alone Tom Watson bent forward eagerly.

"To meet you again it is almost too good! I have thanked you all day in my heart for what you did this morning."

"And you are decided?" Vera asked, quietly.

"Yes—yes. I will go to Rex Darnley on my knees; I will beg him to hush up the affair; not for my sake, but for theirs. He cannot refuse—he must do it!"

"Where did you know this man?"

"I met him at the house of my employers. He took a fancy to me. I told him nothing of my surroundings; he does not know even that my mother lives here. My head was turned in London, and—Heaven forgive me!—I was ashamed of my angel mother and sister toiling like slaves to give me all they could. Rex

Darnley made a friend of me. I was welcome to his rooms. Although a stern foe he is a staunch friend. He is rich—his money is at his friend's disposal. I borrowed, he lent—again and again—always with kind advice. I will tell you my ruin—cards! I played unknown to him; I lost. I was ruined—he was away, started for Italy they told me. With merciless men to deal with, tempted, made with my folly, I listened to the advice of those who led me astray. I wrote Rex Darnley's name across a bill—the rest you know."

"Have courage!" whispered Vera, putting her hand on his shoulder. "You will go to this man soon—when?"

"To-night."

"Hush! here is your sister."

Amy knelt down, and examined the rug carefully.

"It is very odd! I can see nothing," she declared. "I think you must have made some mistake, Vera."

"Yes, dear," Vera turned towards her, "perhaps I did; but come in, and sit down. Maggie will be back directly, and we will have a cup of tea together before I have to go down to the theatre. Mr. Watson likes tea, I am sure—all nice people do."

And so chatting easily Vera set the man at his comfort, and Amy forgot the episode of the doormat as they grew merry over the cup of tea.

## CHAPTER VII.

"Good business, boss."

Mr. Nathaniel De Mortimer nodded his head; shortly he was waiting at the wing, peering through a hole in the scenery at the crammed house.

"Wonders will never come," observed the other, the low comedian of the company; "if I'd been offered ten to one against our taking a blessed shilling in this village hole I'd have jumped at it."

Still Mr. De Mortimer made no remark; he was counting the people as well as he could while Vera thrilled on her sorrowful lay. As she finished a perfect hurricane of applause followed.

The low comedian shrugged his shoulders.

"That girl will be a gold-mine to you, governor," he declared. "Any of the swells here to-night?"

Mr. De Mortimer rubbed his hands.

"The same three," he said, promptly. "they have been every night regular. I suppose Delane fetches them, Bigsby."

Mr. Bigsby shook his head.

"Not a bit of it. I ain't running down Delane; I think she's a very good, useful woman, but she ain't the attraction of this 'ere show. She can't hold a candle to the little 'un."

De Mortimer's brows met.

"Don't go filling Vera's head with that sort of stuff, or she will give me some trouble. She isn't the easiest person in the world to manage, although she is so gentle and timid."

"It would have pleased your poor missus's heart, De Mortimer, to see her girl's success."

The manager growled something and walked away. Vera came off the stage at the same time; she had a smile and a kind word for Bigsby; many a time he had shown her little attentions. She walked to her dressing-room thoughtfully.

This was the third night of *Cinderella*. De Mortimer had cancelled all his other engagements and settled to remain in Bentley for the remainder of the week. The news of the Earl's patronage had spread, and all the people from near and far flocked to the performance. To De Mortimer's delight, Maggie Delane's surprise, and Vera's pain, the three men of the Beaconsfold party came every night. Young as she was, Vera was too well versed in the world's knowledge not to understand what the company meant by their sly hints and winks; and apart from that, the sight of



Rex Darnley's cold, handsome face distressed her, knowing as she did the secret of poor Tom Watson's crime.

It was of this she was thinking as she dressed for the ball-room scene. A day had gone; this was the end of the second, and Tom Watson had not sought his interview with his friend. He was ill—too ill to move from his bed—his mind tortured by the thought of his crime becoming discovered. What was to be done? Vera shrank from the pain that must be inflicted on Amy by taking her into the sad confidence, yet she must soon know all; and with her loving pride in her brother Vera judged too rightly it would almost break her heart.

"Miss Sobersides!" cried Maggie, as she rushed in just to take a peep at her handsome image. "You look as grave as a judge, Vera. I say, isn't this too awfully jolly? It seems like a fairy story. I hear we have a tremendous money house. Nathaniel ought to give us both a gold medal; we certainly have saved the show."

Vera only smiled, her thoughts were all with Tom.

Last night, as she had walked home, Rex Darnley again had walked beside her. She did not know why, but the presence of this man thrilled her most strangely, the tones of his voice stirred her heart. Once she had been on the point of breaking forth about Tom, but even as she did so Rex had spoken some extra harsh words called up by the conversation turning on deception, and her courage failed her.

She went on the stage again, sang, and finished the performance.

When she was dressed in her hat and cloak she found the escort of the three gentlemen, immaculate in their evening dress, waiting.

Vera did not give her hand; she simply bowed, and would have passed on, but Mr. De Mortimer stepped forward with a frown.

"Vera, his lordship—these gentlemen—do you the honour to wish to escort you home."

By the light of the solitary lamp hanging over the door Rex Darnley saw the girl's lips tremble, and the sight pained him.

"Please do not think you are bound to accept it, Miss De Mortimer," he said.

"You are very kind," Vera said, coldly. "If my father has no objection how can I have any?"

Nathaniel De Mortimer frowned. (The Earl pressed forward eagerly.)

"Will you take my arm, Miss De Mortimer?" he asked.

Maggie Delane and Mr. Motte were already on ahead.

Vera hesitated an instant, then passed her hand through the Earl's arm.

"She would not have done that for me," was Rex Darnley's unspoken thought.

He dropped behind, and listened to Mr. De Mortimer's illiterate, pompous boastings in silence.

Vera was a puzzle to him. He could not reconcile the idea of so fair, so eminently pure and gentle a girl being the child of so coarse and common a man. Her coldness, the distaste she openly expressed for the forced acquaintance with the Earl and his guests, unconsciously gratified him. He found himself thinking at all moments about this young actress, whom he had never seen before three days ago.

The Earl walked along in silence; his heart beat strangely at the touch of the small hand on his arm, and he could not repress a feeling of triumph at Vera's undisguised preference for his company.

"I cannot tell you how pleased I am to have made your acquaintance, Miss De Mortimer," he said, eagerly, after a long pause.

"Thank you, my lord," answered Vera.

"I trust we shall meet often after you leave here," continued the Earl.

"It is scarcely likely, my lord," Vera replied, quietly. "Our lives run far apart."

"Nowadays art is recognised," Lord Vivian observed, with a smile. "You will be famous

before long, Miss De Mortimer—I prophecy it! Rex Darnley, my friend, who is never known to flatter or praise, predicts a gigantic future for you."

"Mr. Darnley is very kind."

Vera's voice was cold as ice, yet she was inwardly in a fever of trouble. She was foolish, perhaps; but poor Tom Watson and his gentle mother and sister were ever before her. Vera had never received kindness such as Amy and Mrs. Watson had given her since her mother's death, and it touched her to the heart.

Lord Vivian glanced at her suddenly.

"I wonder why you dislike Rex so much!" he said, involuntarily.

Vera started.

"Dislike him, my lord! I can hardly say that; yet I always have a sort of fear when I am near him."

"Fear!" cried the Earl. "Why, Rex is the kindest man on earth—so gentle, so tender. He is my friend. He is the soul of honour, of chivalry—brave as a lion, pure as a woman!"

Vera's heart thrilled unconsciously at the Earl's enthusiasm.

"He has, at least, one staunch friend, my lord," she said, with a smile; then she added, hurriedly, "But is he not stern and hard—even cruel? He looks it."

Lord Vivian looked amazed.

"Cruel! Oh! Miss De Mortimer, you do, indeed, read him wrongly. He is just and merciful; in fact, Rex is my ideal man."

They had reached the small house by this time, and in two minutes Rex and De Mortimer were with them; Maggie Delane and Mr. Motte were whispering apart.

"What is that about an ideal man?" enquired Rex, as he came up.

Lord Vivian's face flushed in the moonlight. Vera spoke,—

"We were discussing a knight of chivalry, Mr. Darnley," she said, turning to him. "Lord Vivian, I am glad to say, still believes such things exist."

"Eric believes many strange things," Rex observed, with just a glance at Lord Vivian of intense good-fellowship. "You must take all he tells you, Miss De Mortimer, with a grain of salt."

At that moment Mr. Motte joined them.

"I say, Eric, have you got your drag down here?"

"Yes. Why?" asked the Earl.

"Because I thought to-morrow we might, if it is fine, drive Miss Delane, Miss De Mortimer, and some of the other ladies over to Blackrock Castle. They would enjoy it."

"Oh! so much!" cried Maggie Delane, clasping her hands.

"I have the drag down here, Wenty, and I shall be delighted to lend it to you. Unfortunately I cannot offer to be one of the party. I must give up the day to-morrow to my steward."

"That is a pity, old man, by Jove it is!" exclaimed Mr. Motte.

"Yes, it is, indeed," chimed in Miss Delane.

"However, if the ladies are not afraid to trust themselves to my care, Rex will answer for it I know something about driving."

"A little, Wenty," observed Rex, with a smile.

"So, Miss Delane and Miss De Mortimer, if you—"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Motte," Vera said, quietly. "I am afraid I cannot join your party to-morrow."

"Why, Vera?" broke out Maggie.

"Absurd!" began De Mortimer, angrily.

"Oh! Miss De Mortimer, I say, by Jove, that is a disappointment!"

"I am sorry to have to refuse, but I must," the girl said, quietly; but Rex Darnley noticed that her great, lustrous eyes met her father's almost defiantly. "I have a great deal of work to do to-morrow."

"Well, it can't be helped," Maggie observed,

good-naturedly. "And there is no moving Vera when she once makes up her mind."

"Don't give me a bad character, Maggie," Vera said, with a faint smile. "I am sure Mr. Motte will understand how much I appreciate his kindness, and accept my apologies."

She bowed as she spoke.

"Oh! Miss De Mortimer. Of course."

"Then good-night," Vera turned, and held her hand to the Earl, who bowed low over it; then, urged by some strong feeling, she extended it to Rex Darnley, and for the first time their hands met.

A thrill of unspeakable delight ran through Rex as he held the slender fingers in his, and gazed into the depths of the star-like orbs.

Vera felt her cheeks grow warm with the glow of colour that came the next instant they had parted, and she was indoors, following Maggie Delane upstairs.

"Vera, why wouldn't you join the drive to-morrow?" demanded Maggie, almost crossly.

Vera took off her hat and sat down.

"Don't be vexed, dear," she said, wearily, "but I could not. Maggie, I dread being too intimate with these grand people; mother always warned me against it."

"As you like, old girl."

Miss Delane sat down to her supper composedly. Vera took her place.

Beside her plate a little note was lying; she took it up and looked at it in surprise.

"Secrets!" laughed Maggie. "Well, I'm just going to get my slippers. Read your *billet doux*, Vera."

Vera tore open the envelope; inside, scrawled on a bit of paper with a pencil, were a few words:—

"I am ill, I cannot move from my bed; what am I to do? Amy guesses I am troubled; but, oh! she must not know if I can help to keep it from her! In two days more it will be too late. You saved me once, help me again! Only a word will be necessary; speak it as you pass my door. God bless you for your goodness. "TOM WATSON."

When Maggie came back Vera was eating her supper quietly, and she chatted on as usual till they rose to go to rest.

They gathered their things together, and Maggie put out the light.

As they stood in the passage Vera spoke,— "Maggie, one reason that I cannot join you to-morrow is that I have set myself a task to do, and whatever comes I will try and do it."

The last words were spoken clearly; they penetrated the half-closed door of Tom Watson's room, and reached the ears of the poor fellow listening so eagerly for them. The girl's silvery voice was like heavenly music to his fevered brain, breathing as it did a promise of deliverance from the terrible dark bondage of fear that now encircled him.

## CHAPTER VIII.

"I don't know what to do, Rex."

The words were spoken by Lord Dunmoor, eldest son to the Earl of Daly, and brother to the pretty Lady Anice.

The two men were in Lord Vivian's study smoking and talking.

"Do! If she were my sister I should soon know what to do—assert my authority. You are practically the head of your family, Dunmoor; Anice should be brought to her bearings."

"She is unmanageable," said Lord Dunmoor, shaking off the ashes of his cigar. "You know I came here on purpose to remonstrate with her over her extravagance, and all she does is to fling back in my teeth our father's expenditure in redeeming the estate. Folly and wickedness she calls it, while the poor old dad thought only of his honour and his father's name."

"Anice does not understand what honour means, Dunmoor," Rex observed, quietly. Lord Dunmoor was silent for a few moments.

"Do you think Vivian is in earnest?" he asked.

"About Anice?"

Lord Dunmoor nodded.

"It is impossible to say," Rex said, slowly; a vision of the Earl's eager face as he had bent towards Vera last night returning to him. "I think he admires her."

"Many men admire Anice," her brother replied, puffing out a cloud of tobacco. "I don't mind telling you, old fellow, that I am ducedly anxious Anice should marry; she wears my mother to death. I can do nothing with her. I want to wash my hands of her altogether."

"I am not surprised; but you are too weak, Dunmoor. You should show her that you are master, and—"

"May I come in?" cried a clear voice at the door, and Lady Anice appeared, looking like a piece of Dresden china in her dainty morning gown; her lips tightened a little as she saw Rex.

"Talking business? Well, I won't disturb you. I have a message to deliver to Lord Vivian from mamma. Can you tell me where he is?"

"Gone out for the day," Rex answered. "He has some complicated affairs to settle with his steward. I may see him in the course of the morning. Shall I deliver your mother's message?"

Lady Anice coloured just a little.

"Oh, no," she said, airily; "it was a mere bagatelle, and can wait."

The truth was, she had no message at all; but she was overcome with a desire to know where the Earl was gone.

"I saw the drag out early. I thought perhaps, he was arranging some drive for us."

"Did you," observed Rex, quietly. "Oh! Anice, now you are here, Dunmoor and I want to talk seriously to you about—"

Lady Anice put her fingers in her ears.

"I won't listen!" she said, gaily. "Dunmoor has done nothing but scold, mamma scolds, and now you, Rex; it is really too much."

And with a flutter of her laces and ribbons she was gone.

"You see," said Lord Dunmoor, rising. "That's all one can get out of her. I believe she has no heart or sense."

"You wrong her; she has a great deal of the latter, though the former is wanting in her altogether. Where are you going now?"

"I want to ride over to a place somewhere near here, called the Gill; two fellows I know have taken it for the shooting—awfully good chaps. One is an old chum of mine; we were at Eton together. He has just come back from Australia; he went the voyage there and back to get his strength up after a nasty illness. Will you come with me? I should like to introduce you to Moretown and Druce."

"Thanks old fellow, I don't think I will come this morning; I want to have a quiet hour with my correspondence. Eric gave me up his 'den' for the purpose. Look at the mass of work I have before me!"

"Rex, you are a marvel—always slaving as if your life depended on it. What do you do?—and what on earth are all these letters about?"

"State secrets," laughed Rex; "but now, Dunmoor, be off, I must tackle them. We will put our heads together and devise some plan for bringing Miss Anice to her bearings! Aunt Eleanor is looking quite ill. Ta, ta, old boy."

Lord Dunmoor lit another cigar, nodded his head to his cousin, and strode from the room—a broad-shouldered, plain young man, but with an earnest, honest look in his plain face that was worth all his sister's false, fair prettiness.

Rex Darnley drew his chair up to the table and began to sort through his letters. He opened and read some quickly, and then took up a large, blue envelope which he glanced at in surprise.

The contents were a long letter and a piece of paper, which, to his astonishment, he found to be a bill of promise, signed by himself. He gazed at it for some time, then put it down and took up the letter.

He was half way through it, when a footman entered the room and handed him a note.

"The young person is waiting, sir," said the man.

Rex tore open the note.

"May I beg the favour of a few moments' conversation with you? Pray pardon the strange request, the urgency of my errand must be my excuse."

"VERA DE MORTIMER."

Rex half rose with a flush on his dark, handsome face.

"Where is the lady?" he asked, hurriedly.

"In the servants' hall, sir," the man answered, deferentially; but invariably curious while he spoke.

"The servants' hall," repeated Rex, with ill-suppressed vexation; then he was about to go and bring Vera away himself, but his common sense rose to the occasion.

"Kindly show the lady here, Johnson," he said, sinking into his chair again. His heart was beating wildly and his pulse was throbbing. He forgot even the astonishment that had seized him in the letter he was reading, his whole mind was taken up by Vera.

In another instant the footman had ushered in the slender, graceful form clad in black, the exquisite loveliness of the face hidden beneath a thick black veil. Johnson glanced at her as he went out, and took in the great mass of red golden hair with increased surprise as to who Mr. Darnley's visitor might be.

"Miss De Mortimer," Rex rose and stretched out his hand, "this is an agreeable surprise; have you walked here?"

"Yes," answered Vera, in a low voice, as she released her hand from his and took the chair he pushed forward.

She was agitated to a degree—all her courage deserted her again. She was almost on the point of making some excuse and departing, when the memory of Amy, her mother, and the poor wretched man whose future depended on her promise spurred her on.

"It is warm in here. Will you not loosen your veil?" asked Rex, as quietly as he could; he longed to see that fair face again, whose image haunted him.

Vera unfastened the veil.

She was pale, and her eyes were eager.

"Mr. Darnley," she said, lifting her great lustrous orbs to his, "this is a strange proceeding, unorthodox to the last degree, but—but when you have heard the reason of my visit, perhaps you will pardon all that. I come to you as a suppliant."

"You!" Rex rose and half moved towards her eagerly. "What can I do for you?"

"I want nothing for myself," answered Vera. "I—"

She stopped, then went on, quickly,—

"Mr. Darnley you have a friend named Watson?"

"Yes," said Rex, surprised, "I have."

"It is on his account I come. He—you have been deceived, wronged, by him. He meant to have come to you himself this morning, but the mental agony he is enduring has made him ill—he cannot move. I was fortunate enough to save him from seeking his own death two days ago, now I come to you to plead for him. It is in your hands whether his life henceforth is marred or is started afresh. He has committed a crime!"

"Go on," said Rex, coldly.

He resented, he scarcely knew why, this pleading tone for another. His eyes were riveted on her lovely face flushed now with excitement.

"He got into monetary distress. You were not there to help him. He forged your name!"

Rex uttered an exclamation, and turned to his letters. He examined the bill now carefully, then let his hand drop.

"Well," was all he said.

Vera's heart fell at the cold tone.

"This man has a mother, a sister. They know nothing of this—the disgrace will kill them. For their sake I—"

"What is this man to you?" demanded Rex, almost harshly.

Vera turned white, her heart beat wildly.

"I do not understand you," she said, in faint, low tones.

"Why should you plead for him? Does not Tom Watson know me well? Why could he not write to me? Why should you come?"

Vera rose; her hands were trembling.

"I told you he was ill. I alone know his secret, and I—"

"I see," Rex nodded his head, his breast was surging with mad thoughts. "He is your lover?"

Vera shrank back.

"You insult me!" she gasped. "Oh! why did I come!"

"Insult you?" he drew nearer to her, his eyes shining; "insult you—you who are to me the purest, the fairest of Heaven's creatures! No, Vera, you judge me wrongly. Though I have known you but three days, those days answer for years! You have never left my mind—you—"

"Mr. Darnley!" the girl stood upright. "You have no right to address these words to me, but I see I must expect it. My mind was full of that poor man's sufferings when I came here. I forgot that by so doing I could lay myself open to humiliation!"

"Humiliation?" repeated Rex, hotly, then he drew back. "Forgive me, I apologise. Something urged me to speak like that. Go back to Watson; tell him he is pardoned; the affair shall go no farther. Any awkward questions that may arise I will answer. For his mother and sister's sake I will forget everything; tell him to come to me. There is good in him if he is led in the right way. Are you satisfied?"

"Yes," Vera said, simply.

She felt the tears were starting to her eyes, and she turned aside and fastened her veil over her face.

"Now you have succeeded, may I not hope to also?" continued Rex, advancing with outstretched hands. "Will you not forgive my mad words?"

Vera said nothing, but put her hand in his. Rex would have given all his wealth to have snatched that lovely form to his heart and encircled it with his arms.

"I will, if you will allow me, stroll down to the village with you?" he said, quietly. "We can go out through this door."

He led Vera along a passage to a side entrance—he was anxious she should escape the sharp gaze of the ladies' eyes, and the scandal that would arise.

"This shall be a secret between us, Miss De Mortimer," he said, as they passed through the grounds. "No one shall know of poor Tom's weakness here but ourselves."

"You are good," Vera murmured; she felt almost faint now the task was done.

Rex feasted his eyes on her little, slender form, and on the delicate features seen through the veil, his heart still beating wildly.

What was there about this girl that thrilled him so?

Just as they were going towards one of the lodge-gates a figure on horseback approached them. It was old Vivian.

"Why, Rex!" he cried, in surprise, then he checked himself. He gazed at Vera for an instant.

"It is Miss De Mortimer, is it not?"

"It is," replied Rex, briefly.

He felt vexed the Earl had met them, and on his side the Earl was strangely annoyed to see those two together.

"Have you been seeing the gardens?" he asked.

"I had a message to deliver to Mr. Darnley,



my lord," Vera said, quietly; "that accounts for my presence here."

"Beaconsfield is honoured," said Lord Vivian.

He vaulted from his horse, and gave the reins to a groom near at hand.

"Will you not let me show you the grounds now you are here?" he asked, eagerly.

"Thank you no. I must return home."

"Then may I escort you?" persisted the Earl.

Rex frowned; they were at the gate by this time.

"Again I must refuse, my lord," Vera answered, gently. "Will you permit me to say good-bye here?"

She held out her hand to Rex, then to the Earl.

"Not good-bye," cried the Earl, quickly; "only *au revoir*!"

Vera smiled, bowed, and walked away, Rex and Lord Vivian stood silent, watching her as she moved along the road carrying herself with the grace of an Andalusian.

"You are a sly dog, Master Rex!" exclaimed the Earl, as they both turned back.

Rex frowned.

"What do you mean, Eric?" he inquired, coldly.

"You refuse to join me on a plea of business this morning. I am not surprised now I see what that business was; but *entre nous*, old fellow, I think you might have told me she was coming."

"Miss De Mortimer's visit surprised me as much as it does you. It was quite unexpected," observed Mr. Darnley.

The Earl looked at him for an instant with a cloud on his face.

"What did she want?—more patronage, or—"

"I am not at liberty to tell you what Miss De Mortimer's business was."

The Earl flushed.

"We have had few secrets, Rex," he said, hurriedly, "and this—"

"Is one I have given my word of honour to guard closely."

"As you will."

The Earl turned away huffily, but the next instant he was back.

"Our friendship is too old to be severed, or even crossed, by a girl of whom we know nothing, Rex."

"So I think," said Rex, grasping the other's hand as in a vice. "Believe me, old chap, if I could I would tell you all about it, but my lips are sealed. I must not speak."

Vera walked back to the lodgings in a state of curious excitement.

She had succeeded. She was carrying back the tidings of more than life to Tom Watson. Yet though the knowledge of this was a joy to her, she nevertheless longed from the bottom of her heart that she had not gone to Rex Darnley.

Those strange, impassioned words he had uttered rang in her ears, making her heart beat wildly with a new and wondrous delight, yet as the delight was born it died in the flood of shame and hurt pride that overwhelmed her.

"What must he have thought?" she mused, agitatedly, as she hurried along. "This is what mother warned me against. Friendship between such men and myself means empty flattery and insult. But"—her cheeks flushed—"the words he uttered were not insults. He looked in earnest—he could not have been acting! I must not meet him again! I could not! Oh! how I wish we were leaving this village—I long to be gone now! I feel somehow as though destiny held some pain for me here!"

She reached the lodgings. Amy was busy at work; Mrs. Watson was out.

"Are you tired, Vera? If not will you sing a little? Tom would enjoy it so much."

The young fellow was lying on a couch in the small back room. His face was deathly white, his eyes glowing with the eagerness and dread of one almost spent with anxiety.

At sight of him Vera lost all her thoughts about herself.

"I am not in the least tired," she said, gently, removing her veil and hat, and going to the piano. "I am in the proud position of having accomplished a task. Yes, Mr. Watson, I assure you," she added, answering his mute look, "I had some work to do this morning. At one time, I confess, I thought it would vanquish me; but you will be glad to hear I have succeeded utterly, completely succeeded."

Then she sat down and began to sing softly, keeping her eyes carefully turned from Tom Watson, who had covered his face with his hands to hide the tears that would come.

(To be continued.)

## BUT NOT OUR HEARTS.

### CHAPTER XVI.—(continued.)

"I WANT you to look well to-night, my dear; be careful with your toilet, or let Fadette choose your dress," said Lady Dorothy, a few days later, at breakfast, as she stirred her chocolate, glancing across at her companion.

"Yes, aunt. Where are we going?" inquired Miss Vane, looking up from her perusal of a letter headed H.M.S. *Juno*.

"To the Duchess de Pescara. A dinner first, to which only the *élite*, including ourselves, are invited, and a dance afterwards."

"It will be a long evening, then?"

"For me, not for you, who can valse and enjoy yourself."

"We need not stay for the dancing, aunt, if you don't wish it," she said gently.

"Yes, we will," replied the obstinate old woman. "What have you come to town for, but to see and be seen? Besides, I shall enjoy it. I shall like to see faded beauties of past seasons forced to bow to your superior charms—forced to give way and retire."

"I hope they won't have to do that."

"Humph! You're not like most of them, ready to tear each other's eyes out with envy."

"Oh, no! I should never envy another woman anything while I possess Paul's love."

"No, of course not. That's all right. This isn't, though," she added a moment after, as she glanced over an epistle she held. "This has been delayed. It is from Max. He will be here to-day."

"Really? So soon?"

"Yes. How tiresome. I must go and give orders to have his rooms prepared," and she finished her chocolate and bustled away to give orders, and superintend the carrying out of them.

Opal was seated in a little boudoir, all sky-blue satin and silver, when she heard the door open, and, concluding it was Lady Dorothy, asked,—

"Has Max come, and is lunch ready?"

"Yes, to both questions," replied a deep, masculine voice. And jumping up she found herself face to face with a tall, handsome man.

"I—I—did not—know—you had arrived!" she faltered, blushing divinely.

"No. I came to announce the interesting fact. And so you are the little cousin I remember seeing some years ago! How you have grown! Quite a young woman now!" taking her hands in his as he spoke, and holding them longer than was absolutely necessary.

"Do you really remember me?" she asked, pleased at his saying so.

"Really. I have a vivid recollection of you, in a black gown, with all this," touching the amber hair, "falling about your shoulders like a veil of spun silk. And do you remember me?"

"Yes."

"And do you think I have altered?" he demanded.

"Hardly at all," she answered, scanning his face somewhat timidly.

"Do I look older?"

"No."

"Uglier?"

"Oh, no."

"That is right. Aunt says you never tell fibs, so I shall not shrink now from the criticism of those dear friends, whom I have not seen for the past few years."

"I don't think you need," she said innocently, paying him a compliment without knowing it.

"That is consoling. But let me take you into lunch," and, offering her his arm, he conducted her to the dining-room, and was most attentive during that meal, while Opal stole supercilious glances at him, and wondered whether the hot Indian sun had tanned his hair and moustache to that rich golden shade, for she thought it had certainly looked redder to her childish eyes than it did now, and his face not nearly so handsome.

Perhaps his bronzed skin accounted for that, and made the white teeth, lavishly displayed when he smiled, look whiter, the light blue orbs—the least attractive feature in the attractive face—darker, and gave an altogether more manly appearance.

"So you've renewed your former acquaintance?" said Lady Dorothy.

"Yes. We have had quite a cousinly chat."

"That's right. And what do you think of her?" nodding her head towards her niece.

"I think she is everything she ought to be," he replied, guardedly, for he by no means approved of the open way in which his aunt praised her *protégé's* good-looks to their faces.

"Humph! That may mean anything or nothing."

"Do you think so?"

"Of course I do. And that's what you meant me to."

"Then I ought to be satisfied."

"You ought, but I don't suppose you are."

"I don't suppose anyone ever is here below," he replied, rising with a heavy yawn.

"Blasé as ever."

"I think I am. That sort of thing doesn't pass away with the years that roll over our heads. Rather, it grows worse."

"That depends upon the mode of life one leads."

"Does it?"

"Naturally."

"And you think the life I have led has—"

"Has been about as bad for you as it possibly could."

"Ah! Perhaps you are right," he agreed lazily, as though it were not worth disputing about.

"Of course I am. I hope you don't feel too much done up and *ennuyé* to escort to a dance and dinner this evening?"

"I am always at your service," he rejoined, with negligent politeness.

"Humph!" grunted his aunt, using her favourite interjection. "Kind to say that."

"Where is it?"

"At Pescara House."

"Ah!" he said again. "Still keep up your friendship with the Duchess?"

"Yes. She is one of my greatest favourites."

"Can't imagine why she is."

"You ought to know. I adore physical beauty."

"And don't care a fig for mental."

"I don't say that. Still I prefer a handsome face to a clever brain."

"I know you do, and a woman with a lovely face to one with a clean, unstained reputation."

"Max!" Her tone was full of indignation.

"It is true."

"It is not true."

"What! When you persist in being

intimate with such a woman as the Duchess José?"

"She is all right."

"Most people think she is all wrong."

"Most people are scandal-mongers."

"Very true. Still there is seldom smoke without fire."

"Pooh! Where is the smoke?"

"Ivora Rowand used to be looked upon as very tangible smoke before I sailed for India."

"Nonsense. He is simply a friend."

"Exactly. *Ami de la maison, ami de la femme.*"

"And of the husband."

"Of that I can hardly judge. He is so seldom to be seen."

"Indeed he is. He drives with her in the Park once or twice a week, heads the table when she gives a big dinner, takes her to the Opera in the season, and always escorts her to Monte Carlo, Nice, or any other place she may choose to go to in the autumn."

"He doesn't stay there, though, and of course showing up in the Park and at the Opera is arranged, for the edification of the public."

"Max, you are absolutely abominable!"

"Not at all. It doesn't matter for you, only I don't think you ought to take that child to such a woman's house."

"Ridiculous. I won't listen to another word," and she didn't, for seizing on her stick she stumped out of the room in high dudgeon, at the abuse her favourite had received.

To do her justice, she did not believe the Duchess was as bad as her friends painted her; she thought she was only fond of flirtation and amusement, fine dress, and fine jewels. Had she really thought there was anything more than a mere platonic friendship between José and Sir Ivors she would not have allowed Opal inside her house. But she was terribly obstinate, and when she took a fancy to a person would believe nothing bad of them, unless she had the most substantial proof.

## CHAPTER XVII.

THERE WAS a blaze of light in the rooms at Pescara House, as Lady Dorothy and her niece and nephew entered, and the Duchess stood just under the chandelier receiving her guests, glittering with jewels, magnificent in lace and brocade—a splendid woman still, though her years numbered thirty eight, and her life had been one which tells on looks. Yet her lovely large eyes were bright and lustrous, her black hair abundant and shining, her complexion smooth, and hardly requiring the pains she bestowed on it, and her figure superb.

"Charmed to see you!" she smiled to her old friend, "and you, Colonel Lonsdale. Quite an age since we have met!"

At which Max muttered something unintelligible, for he was not over well-pleased at being obliged to attend the Duchess's dinner.

"And this is your niece? An *ingénue*, and a lovely one! She graces my *salon*;" but as she spoke the Spaniard's eyes shot a flaming, jealous glance at the fair girl, who looked so pure and beautiful in a white dress with silver embroidery round the hem, and sleeves, and throat, and a dagger of antique workmanship thrust through the loose twists of amber hair.

"Thanks!" said Lady Dorothy, taking the credit of the beauty all to herself.

"What an ass I have been!" thought Ivors, as he looked at the noble, sweet face of the girl at his side. She fell to his lot to take down to dinner, José having to give the place of honour to a snuffy, bald-headed Hidalgo, whom she could have strangled with her lithe, brown fingers, because he took the place she would have wished her lover to occupy; and then glanced at the haughty, passionate face of his mistress, and at whose cheek the rouge

was just apparent, though skillfully laid on, and whose dress displayed more than he in his present frame of mind approved of.

"Worse than that; to tie myself to a woman who will never set me free. If she doesn't I must break my bonds myself. They are no longer rosy ones, and I cannot go on simulating a passion I do not feel. Heaven! if I could only live the last few years over again, only feel myself worthy to be the husband of this pure girl. That is not possible still I may make a fresh start, and it shall be a better one than the first," and settling the matter thus to his own satisfaction, he pushed unpleasant thoughts aside, and made himself agreeable to his companion, despite the black looks cast at him by the Duchess.

"What was Rowand saying to you at dinner?" asked Max, leaning his head back on the crimson velvet cushion, doubtless because he knew it set off his blond face admirably, and looking at his cousin attentively.

"Why do you ask?" she inquired.

"Because I want to know. He is a most awful flirt, one of the greatest ever created, and I consider myself a sort of elder brother, you see, so think you ought to tell me."

"Elder brothers, I think, don't usually ask these sort of questions," she answered, with a little smile.

"Don't they? How do you know?"

"As a rule, they are not interested enough in their sisters to do so."

"Indeed! Is that your opinion?" with a side glance at the dainty head with the golden tendrils wandering over the white temple.

"Yes."

"I am a cousin-brother, a different kind of thing, and I do take sufficient interest in you to ask these sort of questions."

"I thought you did not take an interest in anything," she said, innocently, regarding him with widely open eyes.

"I don't," he acknowledged, candidly, arraying the gardenia in his buttonhole, "as a rule. Of course there are exceptions to that rule, and you are one of them." He lifted the "china blue" orbs Ruby objected to so much as he spoke, and looked full into those deeper ones with unusual earnestness.

The fact was he admired his cousin in her evening attire immensely, and then she was so fresh and natural, so different from the women he had been used to in India, who blushed at nothing.

It was quite delightful to see the red blood mount to Opal's face at a bold glance, or an equivocal word, to watch the dark-fringed lids droop, and the exquisite lips quiver.

He was blasé and weary, had discounted life at a terrible pace, and, moreover, was a disappointed man.

He was the grandson of an earl, and for many years had been looked upon as the probable successor to the title and estates of Grassmere, but just before his twenty-eighth birthday his uncle, his father's elder brother, married a young wife, who bore him a child regularly every year—sometimes a son, sometimes a daughter—and thus the Honourable Max Lonsdale's only child dropped into comparative insignificance, and lost all chance of becoming Earl of Grassmere.

This had been a bitter blow to the gay hussar, and one from which he never recovered. It changed him. He became hard, cynical, sceptical, and reckless, ran through the fortune his father left him, and plunged on the turf, ran into debt, and at forty had nothing left to live for save his profession, to which he was passionately attached.

Still he could admire a pretty woman when he saw one, provided hers was a natural prettiness, and that she was not indebted to her perfumer for her complexion, nor to her corset-maker for her figure; and besides being nice to look at Opal was nice to talk to.

She soothed him somehow or the other. Her voice was so low and gentle, her skin so

smooth and white, and her gown so pleasing for the eye to rest upon.

"Are you going to tell me?" he demanded, after a pause.

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"Because I have forgotten what he did say."

"Is that a fact?"

"I never tell stories."

"No, by the way, aunt said you didn't. Then his conversation didn't interest you much?"

"I am afraid not."

"Poor young man. He is much to be pitied."

"Why do you say that?" she asked.

"Well, don't you think he is?"

"No."

"Not even when you forget what he has said half-an-hour after he has said it?"

"That does not matter. Probably he has forgotten, too."

"I don't think so. Still that is of no moment I am glad you forget what he says."

"Why?" with another look from the deep eyes, that somehow or other gave the Colonel a sensation he had not experienced for many a long day.

"Because, as I told you, he is an abominable flirt, and doesn't mean a word that he says."

"I don't think you ought to say that."

"Why not, cos?"

"It is unkind, and how do you know he is a flirt?"

"I am sure of it. He whispers all sorts of soft nothings into the ears of every girl he comes across, and then—there are other things."

"What are the other things?"

"Ah! You mustn't ask," he returned, with a laugh, as he thought of the Duchess José.

"I couldn't tell you about those things."

"No!"

"You wouldn't care to hear them."

"How can you tell?"

"I am sure of it," he returned, confidently; "and promise me, don't dance with him to-night."

"But—I have promised him a valise."

"Never mind; say you are engaged to me. Here he comes. I shall tell him it is mine."

Rowand came towards the alcove, where they were sitting, looking confident and well-pleased, a happy smile on his lips. "This is our dance, Miss Vane; I hope you have remembered it?" he said, offering his arm.

"You make a mistake; this dance is mine," interfered Lonsdale.

"I think not," returned the Highlander, showing his wristband, on which was scrawled her name.

"My cousin's name is on my programme, and mine on hers," displaying the two cards he had secured.

"You promised it to me," appealing to her.

"I think you must be wrong," said the Colonel, coolly. "Miss Vane promised it to me, and with me she will dance it," and drawing her hand through his arm he led her away triumphantly, leaving Sir Ivors with a very black frown on his brow, and a fear at his heart that this dashing hussar, newly returned from the East, might be more to her than he could wish him to be.

Lady Dorothy left soon after, so that he had not another opportunity of dancing with, or paying her any attention; still, when all the other guests had left Pescara House, and the Duke had retired to his own room, a stormy scene took place between the Duchess and her quondam lover, in the retirement of her own boudoir, where the amber velvet curtains shut out the first grey beams of the early spring morning, and prevented prying eyes from seeing too much.

"How did it go off?" she asked, lighting a cigarette, and throwing herself indolently on to a couch.

"Oh! pretty well," he replied, indifferently, staring moodily at the handful of dying embers in the grate.



"Only pretty well? Was that all? I should have thought you would have considered it a success, and have said so."

"Would you?"

"Yes. You don't often say pretty things to me now."

"Don't I?"

"No. You know you don't. Neither do you take the trouble to be particularly civil or pleasant."

"I am sorry I don't please you," he returned, coldly.

"It isn't that you do not please me; it is the other way about, and you know it."

"I certainly can't make out what you are driving at," he said, sulkily. "If you want to get red of me say so, and I'll go; only we needn't quarrel or have any fuss over it. It can be done quietly."

"That's just it," she cried, violently, rising and tossing away the cigarette. "You want to go, and to do it quietly, so that nothing objectionable may come to the ears of that white-faced doll Lady Dorothy brought here to-night."

"Surely," he expostulated, with a gesture of annoyance, "we need not bring Miss Vane's name into our squabbles?"

"Need we not, when you love her?"

"You are going rather far, José," he remarked, icily.

"You love her," she reiterated, going over and standing near him, her eyes glowing like a panther's. "You love her. Deny it if you can. I saw it as you looked at her, as you talked to her, it showed in every gesture."

"I don't deny it," he said, coolly.

"You dare to say this to me?" she cried, clenching her hands.

"Since you insist upon knowing it, yes."

"You dare not leave me?"

"Why not? There is no tie to keep me."

"You—you loved me once," she faltered, the angry light dying out of her dark eyes, the colour from her cheek, as her head sank on to her breast.

"And I care for you now, José," he said, gently. "Only such a *liaison* as ours could not last for ever; of that you must have been well aware; when you entered into it. I must form other ties I must marry. If I don't who is there to succeed me at Rowand Castle? I am the last of my race. What have I to look forward to now? Nothing, simply nothing. I have no home, no wife, no children. A dead blank faces me on every side."

"You—should—have thought of all—that—before."

"True. But my passion for you blinded me, and—"

"And now your passion for another opens your eyes."

"How you harp upon that string!" he rejoined, irritably.

"Do I?" she said, humbly. "I do not mean to vex you. But don't leave me, Ivors!" she cried, flinging herself at his feet, and clasping his knees with her jewelled hands. "You are mine—mine! I cannot let you go to any other woman. I cannot live without you."

"José, this is folly. We can still be friends."

"Friends! Hark at him!" she gasped, with a shrill laugh. "Friends, after what we have been, after what you have made me—"

"Stay!" he interrupted, "don't blame me for that. You more than met me halfway."

"I loved you," moaned the miserable, guilty woman, crouching at his feet.

"Then you will let me go, now that I want my freedom."

"I cannot. You are all I have in the world."

"There is your husband!"

"I despise and detest him."

"Your child!"

"I hate him because he is Luigi's son, and not yours."

"You must learn to love him, and to do without me."

"You are cruel, Ivors. I can never do that."

"You fancy so now. You will forget me after a while."

"Never while I live!"

"You mistake."

"I do not; and beware how you cast me aside for that pale-faced chit. I will have revenge, as there is a Heaven above me!"

"You are becoming melodramatic, and—I object to scenes;" and, releasing himself from her clinging hands, he went out into the dim light of the early morning, with nothing but regret in his heart for those mis-spent years passed in tender dalliance with another man's wife.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

OPAL was not long insensible to Sir Ivor's attentions—after the dinner at Pescara House—nor to the nature of them; but so long as he withheld a declaration of his feelings so long was she compelled to receive his politeness, and appear insensible to any peculiarity in his manner. It was utterly impossible for a woman of Opal's temperament to treat a man unkindly; her nature would not admit of such a proceeding, and her soft, gentleness of manner may have raised hopes of ultimate success in his bosom, though her bearing was far from encouraging; and Sir Ivors, being apprehensive of a refusal, often stifled the declaration that rose to his lips, some instinct warning him that her answer would consign him to despair.

"What is that fellow always hanging about for?" demanded Colonel Lonsdale, angrily, one day, when on returning from a drive in the park they found the Highlander awaiting them.

"Can't you see?" chuckled Lady Dorothy.

"He is after Opal?"

"Yes."

"You ought to put a stop to it."

"I! Why?"

"He isn't a fit person for her to marry."

"Isn't he?" innocently.

"No."

"Oh, indeed! Most people would consider him an excellent match."

"Most people have got nothing to do with us."

"Quite so."

"The long and short of it is, aunt, that if you won't put an end to this fellow's intentions I will."

"Don't trouble yourself, dear boy," laughed the old lady, "Opal will do that herself."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that she will tell him to go."

"How do you know?"

"Well, I think she is too honourable to engage herself to two men at the same time."

"Two men, aunt?"

"Yes. She is already engaged."

"You don't mean that?" he cried, sharply.

"Yes I do," she nodded, "and I think it's well for you, Max Lonsdale, that she is, or you'd make a fool of yourself over her, and propose."

"Quite so, and keep her and myself on four hundred a year!" he sneered bitterly to hide the pain he felt.

"Might do worse."

"Of course. Who is the happy man?"

"Paul Chicherly."

"Ah! the fellow who gave up everything to his father's creditors?"

"Yes."

"Good sort of fellow. Shouldn't mind seeing her married to a man of that kind."

"Wouldn't you really? That is nice."

"Glad you think so," he rejoined, abruptly, as he left the room.

A fortnight later, at a luncheon given at Marlow, Sir Ivors found courage to tell Opal what had long been trembling on his lips. He had induced her to leave the others on the pretext of showing her a fine bit of scenery, and they were seated in a light skiff moored under the overhanging willows.

It was a charming spring day, mild and balmy, almost like summer in its warmth and brilliance. The tinted sunbeams quivered through the tender green of the young leafage, and sparkled and danced on the rippling water. Gentle breeze rustled the flags and the reeds; the wild birds were calling to each other; a lark was singing and soaring somewhere up among the loosened silver of the fleecy clouds that were sailing in the blue vault of Heaven; the daisies were shaking their white frills amid the springing grasses, and the bright blue of the periwinkle and ground ivy was sprinkled here and there. The lofty bank displayed the budding foliage of various beautiful trees and ground plants; the river winding its way softly along pleased the eye by the gem-like lustre with which it reflected the sunrays, and the ear by its murmuring ripple, which harmonised with the carols of the feathered songsters.

"What an enchanting spot!" exclaimed Miss Vane.

"Is it not?" assented her companion, gazing, however, at her face, and not at the Quarry Woods. "It seems formed for lovers to spend some rosy hours in."

Opal gave him an uneasy look at this speech, and the glance of her deep eyes made him lose all self-control, as flinging himself on his knees beside her he poured out a vehement declaration, laying his heart and his possessions at her feet.

"My every thought has been yours from the first moment I beheld you," he went on, as she with averted head listened to his passionate words. "You are the arbiter—the sole arbiter—of my future life. You can make me most happy or most unutterably wretched."

"Oh! do not say that, Sir Ivors," she cried, in great distress.

"I must. Forgive me if I pain you. Do not turn away your sweet face. Give me some hope. I will wait years for you if you wish it—serve as Jacob did for Rachel. Your word shall be my law—your time mine. I will not think of the weary waiting, I will only sigh for the dear reward. Hope has trembled only feebly in my bosom; those who love greatly must fear greatly also. But, dearest Opal, tell me that there is happiness in the future for me—that my hopes will not be blasted?"

"Indeed, indeed, I cannot," she said, piteously, turning her blanched cheek towards him. "I can give you no hope. Rise, I beg, do not kneel to me. You distress me inexcessibly."

He rose at once, still holding her passive hand, and seated himself beside her, looking with apprehension at her pallid face and tear-filled eyes, that too surely showed him what his fate would be.

"I could find my earthly heaven in your love; don't deny it me?" he pleaded, desperately. "Give me but the shadow of encouragement; and if a pure, ardent, faithful affection can wake a response from you I am safe, for you are all the world to me, the sole object for which I care to live."

"Ah, no, no!" wringing the hand that was free. "Let me have your esteem, your friendship, but not—not your love."

"You have those, too."

"Then take back the other. Unsay your words," she implored.

"That is impossible," herejoined. "There is nothing I wouldn't do to win a response from you. I have pictured you in the old place among the Scotch mountains as mistress where my mother reigned, pictured you as I never have, and never shall, any other woman," he said, firmly; but even as he spoke a vision of another face floated before his mental sight—a dark face, with revengeful, passionate, Southern eyes, and a chill fell on him.

"The honour you offer I cannot accept," she replied, more collectedly.

"My misgivings, then, were prophetic?"

"They were indeed. I can never return the feeling you entertain for me."

"Do not—that it will never be in

your power to—to return it. If your affections are not already engaged, suffer me to be your devoted slave. Let me hope?"

"I cannot," she faltered, blushing deeply; "my—my—affections—are—not free."

She could not say more. To her there was something almost sacred in her love for Paul, and the tie that bound them together. She could not speak of it to a comparative stranger.

"I feared this," sighed the Highlander. "I feared the prize I sought was too precious for me to gain. I have watched you, and have seen you start from a deep reverie that showed your thoughts were far away, and your eyes seemed to see things not visible to those around you. 'Don't drive me from you!' he burst out a minute later. 'I can't bear not to see you at all. Let us be friends. If you hate me it will drive me to destruction.'"

"I do not hate you," she said, gently, pity beaming from her soft blue eyes, "and we can always be friends."

"Yes, always," he agreed, eagerly, pressing her fingers, and kissing them rapturously, a proceeding which made her shrink, and covering her pale cheek with blushes.

It seemed to her a sort of sacrilege that any man should kiss even her hands save Paul, and she begged him, in low and trembling tones, to take her to Lady Dorothy, a request with which he reluctantly complied.

One glance at Sir Ivors was all that astute old lady required to see that he had met with a rebuff, which oppressed his spirits to no small degree; and she chuckled to such an extent during their drive home that both her companions regarded her with astonishment, and Max took the first opportunity of asking her what amused her so much.

"Sir Ivors has got his *congé*," she answered. "Has the fellow had the impertinence to propose?"

"Yes, the fellow has, and received an answer that did not agree with him at all."

"I thought he looked dejected, and I hope it will keep him away from her."

"I hardly think it will. He is too much in love."

"You think he will storm the citadel again?"

"I am sure of it."

"The brute! I wish we could keep him away from here."

"I don't. I enjoy looking on—it's fine sport—and I can't be inhospitable enough to forbid him the house."

"You could if you liked."

"But I don't like. That is just it, dear boy," and her ladyship chuckled vigorously, and gave a dinner-party a few nights later; and among the guests were the Duchess José and Ivors Rowand, and the latter talked to his old love, and looked at his new, and was thoroughly unhappy.

Opal was far from flattered at her conquest, and did her best to discourage him, but her gentleness and pity for him made her less cold than she might have been, and he, being unable to keep away from Branksome Brae, drank deep of the intoxicating cup, and deceived himself by thinking he might yet win the prize his soul longed for.

He watched her closely, hoping for some sign of relenting, and he scrutinised every man who approached her with jealous vigilance, but she seemed alike indifferent to them all, and showed only a greater interest in her cousin, Max Lonsdale, which, of course, was only natural, for Sir Ivors had ascertained that he—Max—was not the man to whom her love was given.

So matters went on, and April had merged into May, when one afternoon as Sir Ivors lounged in Lady Dorothy's boudoir, awaiting her return from the park with her niece, his eyes fell on a letter addressed to Miss Vane in a masculine hand. Instinctively he took it up, and on the flap of the letter was H.M.S. Juno.

"From the man she l—cares for," he muttered. "I will give it to her myself;" and a few minutes later, when she came into

the room alone, he gave it to her, saying, "This will doubtless interest you."

The colour rose redly over cheek and brow as she saw the writing.

"From my fortunate rival?" he exclaimed. "Tell me."

"You have no right to ask," she replied, with more dignity than he had ever seen her display.

"Forgive me, my dearest," he returned, humbly; "but I have been harbouring hopes, and this letter comes to dash them. In time I thought I might win you."

"I told you not to do so."

"I know. Yet what a fate for me!—not a ray of hope through a long life of wretchedness!"

"I am sorry, deeply sorry, that I have caused you pain. Believe me, it has been wholly unintentional on my part."

"I know; it is the result of my own folly."

"I beg you will put all fancies with regard to me aside. They can be but idle dreams. What you offer I cannot accept."

"Is the seal really set on my destiny? Is there a barrier nothing can overthrow between us?"

"There is."

"Oh! Opal," he sighed, covering his face with his hands, as though to shut out the sight of that beauty which had been so fatal to him.

"While I was yet a child, before I really understood what love was, my affections were given, unchangeably and irrevocably, and my heart passed into another's keeping once and for ever. I am engaged, and the man I love will one day be my—husband."

With a deep flush she spoke these last words, and Sir Ivors, in a voice of deep despair, exclaimed,—

"Then I am undone, utterly lost!" and hurriedly left the room, not wishing to distress her by showing the emotions he was powerless to control, for the arrow had sunk deep into his heart.

The girl he fled from stood like a statue—an image of grief and regret—for a long while, insensible to everything around her, down even to the letter she held in her hand.

It caused her the keenest anguish to think she had given pain to another, spoilt a life that might have been happy but for her, though she had been in no way to blame for it. She pitied her would-be lover from the bottom of her heart, and wished she could alleviate the pangs he felt, little knowing that he had dealt out to another the same measure of bitterness that had been awarded to him.

"I am so sorry," she murmured, at last, and—and I must go home. I cannot remain here, and listen to his passionate pleading. It pains me too much."

To think with her was to act, and still holding Paul's letter in her hand she went to Lady Dorothy's room, where Fadette was skilfully rouging the withered cheeks and dressing her up for dinner, and told her aunt she must go back to the Rest.

"Tired of me and London, eh?"

"No, aunt, not tired of you; but I have been here some time, and—and father may want me," she faltered, disconcerted by the keen glance she encountered.

"Well, well, do as you like. Still, you mustn't go till after Thursday, as a friend of yours is coming here."

"Very well," she assented at once, glad of an easy victory, and not troubling to ask who the friend was. "I will arrange for Saturday."

"Yes, that will do," and then she went off to the seclusion of her own room, and devoured Paul's letter, the last she was to receive from that dear hand.

She thought no more of what her aunt had said, so it surprised her considerably when she entered the drawing-room on Thursday evening to see a tall figure that was strangely familiar standing on the hearthrug, talking to Max; and it surprised her more, and gave her a shock as though some one was pouring ice-

cold water down her back, when the figure turned, and she saw the mummy-like face of Mr. Spragg.

He advanced eagerly to meet her, for he had been greatly disconcerted when he found she had flown from Dene without a word of warning, and clasped her hand with a warm pressure, which did not escape the Colonel's keen eye.

Opal felt the old shuddering sensation as she glanced at the American, more repulsive-looking than ever in evening dress, and she was quite relieved when her cousin offered her his arm, and led the way to the dining-room, Lady Dorothy and the "dry goods man" bringing up the rear.

But later on in the evening, when the two gentlemen joined them again after dinner, he was so agreeable, and talked so kindly of the boys, and especially the favourite Billie, and of Ruby and her father, that she forgot her repugnance, and found herself talking to him quite amicably.

"Sir Humphrey Scargill has come to grief," he said, after awhile.

"How?" inquired his hostess.

"Horse-racin' chiefly, I believe."

"Humph! How does Mrs. Bevoir like that?"

"Not at all."

"Is Bella going back to live at Blacklands?"

"No; it is not quite so bad as that. He will be able to keep his wife still, but he must retrench."

"How is he going to do that?"

"By givin' up the turf first, and by givin' up his expensive mode of livin'. Westcourt is to be let."

"Is it?" queried Lady Dorothy, quickly. "I think I shall take it. I look upon Westcourt as an ideal dwelling-place."

"Very pretty," admitted the American. "Rather small, though."

"I don't want a big house."

"True. Nice little cabin for a lady."

"Wonder what Sir Humphrey wants for it?"

"I can inquire, if you wish?"

"Thanks. Will you?"

"With pleasure."

"Are they still there?"

"Yes. I guess they won't turn out for a month or two yet."

"That would just suit me, if I could go in about the middle of July."

"Pleasantest time in the country."

"Just so."

"Then I will let you know all particulars next week, and if you decide upon takin' it, let me know, and I will settle all matters for you."

"You are very kind."

"Not at all. I guess I'm only too happy to do anything I can to oblige you."

And after sundry more protestations of the same nature, Mr. Spragg took his departure, only to return the next morning as early as he could with some lovely flowers for the ladies, and a box for the opera, to which they all went that evening—a *partie carrée*—returning, when it was over, to a snug little supper at Branksome Brae.

(To be continued.)

From of old doubt was but half a magician; she evokes the spectres which she cannot quell. Thou shalt know that this universe is what it professes to be, an infinite one.

Ir the conclusions a woman has reached are sound, that is all that concerns us. And that they are very apt to be sound on the practical matter of domestic and secular life nothing but prejudice or self conceit can prevent us from acknowledging. The inference, therefore, is unavoidable, that the man who thinks it beneath his dignity to take counsel with an intelligent wife stands in his own light, and betrays that lack of judgment which he tacitly attributes to her.



### "I LOVE YOU SO."

How many times shall I repeat  
The well-worn words, "I love you," sweet?  
How often can you bear to hear  
The "old, old story" whispered, dear  
Shall I confess with every breath  
A love that cannot die with death?

These hours of parting come so soon;  
And yet the swiftly-sinking moon  
Warns me that I must break away  
For one long weary night and day!  
How can I if I would?—for lo!  
These clinging hands detain me so!

So tangled in the subtle snare  
Hid in these coils of nut-brown hair;  
So surely it has captured me,  
That though I struggle to be free,  
'Tis all in vain—I cannot go,  
These silken fetters bind me so.

When eyes, that never can deceive,  
With tears entreat me not to leave,  
Pray, tell me, how can I resist?  
When sweetest lips that ever kissed,  
With fond beseeching bid me stay,  
How can I, darling, break away?

So much to lose, and yet I gain  
Sweet compensation for the pain  
Of these farewells! You would not dare  
The secret of your heart to bare,  
Save when the parting moment comes,  
When slow, sad tick of pendulums

Tell us, dear love, that we must part;  
'Tis then I read aright your heart!  
But look! the moon has dropped from sight;  
It is so hard to say "good-night";  
Though eyes and lips both bid me go,  
I cannot—for "I love you so!"

L. P.

## HILDA'S FORTUNES.

—:—

### CHAPTER XXXII.

ON his way to Dr. West's house Eric passed the churchyard, and turned back to enter the little wooden gate in order to look at the marble which marked the resting-place of the woman he was inclined to believe to have been his mother.

He had no difficulty in finding it, for the grave was close to the footpath that led up to the little ivy-mantled church, and he at once recognised it by Mrs. Sibley's description. It was quite a simple monument—a cross of stainless marble, on which was cut the name and dates, as the landlady of the "Feathers" had said.

"IN MEMORY OF  
FLORA.

Born 26th June, 183-. Died 12th July, 185-."

She had died at the age of four-and-twenty, and that was all the stone told him.

Eric turned away with a sigh. She had been young and beautiful, and if she had sinned, surely Death had made atonement?

In a softened frame of mind he went on until he came to a red-brick house facing the street, on the door of which was a brass plate bearing the name of "Dr. West, Surgeon."

On inquiry he found the old gentleman was at home, and, thereupon, he was ushered into the dining-room, where he discovered him seated in an armchair close to the fire, his legs stretched out to the blaze, and a decanter of port wine and a plate of filberts on the table at his elbow. He was a jovial-looking man with white hair, which contrasted strangely, but not unpleasantly, with his rosy cheeks.

"How d'ye do, sir—how d'ye do!" he exclaimed, with much cordiality, as his visitor entered. "I am speaking to Captain Verrall,

of the—th?" he added, glancing at the card in his hand.

Eric bowed assent, and seated himself in accordance with the doctor's invitation.

"I may state that I have not called to consult you professionally," he observed, "but to trespass on your kindness in order to make a few inquiries."

"Delighted to be of service to you, my dear sir, delighted! I have often read your name in the papers, but I never thought I should have the honour of entertaining one of the bravest soldiers and most distinguished men in Her Majesty's army."

"You are pleased to think more highly of me than I deserve," said the young man, with a grave smile. "I wished to ask if you could give me any particulars concerning a lady who died at Ivy Cottage some twenty years ago?"

"You mean Mrs. George?" interrupted Dr. West, quickly. "May I ask if you are any relation of the deceased lady?" he continued, glancing keenly at his visitor.

"I think I may say I am. Why do you ask?"

"Because"—bluntly—"you are so like her."

"You must have a good memory to be able to trace a likeness after this period of time!"

"I have, sir—a very good memory, although, if I had not, I don't think I should have forgotten Mrs. George. She is the sort of woman one only sees once in a lifetime."

"You took an interest in her?"

"I did—a very great one; and if she had not been married"—Eric noticed that he hesitated a little over the word, as if not quite sure of his ground—"my interest might have developed into one much greater. I am an old man now, so I don't mind making the confession; fifteen or twenty years ago I should have been more reticent."

Verrall came to the conclusion that Dr. West was a gossip, who dearly loved the sound of his own tongue—and the conclusion was a pretty correct one. The old gentleman saw very few visitors, and was delighted at the opportunity of a chat with one. He pressed Eric to have some wine, and, in spite of the young man's remonstrance, poured him out a glass.

"Nonsense, nonsense!" he exclaimed, in answer to the officer's refusal; "I am a doctor, and I know what is good for a man. That is '58 port, let me tell you, sir, and not to be despised even by connoisseurs. I had a butt in, and bottled it myself, so I can vouch for its being the genuine article. I remember the year I bottled it." Then followed an anecdote to which Eric was forced to listen patiently and laugh at heartily. On its conclusion he brought his jovial host back to the point by saying,—

"Did you ever see Mr. George?"

"Yes, when the little boy was born, but never afterwards. There was some sort of a mystery about him, for he evidently did not wish to be recognised. I have often wondered what the reason was; sometimes I thought perhaps he was one of those gentlemanly scoundrels who live by their wits, and then again I fancied he was a member of the nobility who wished to keep his identity secret."

"What made you think that?" quickly queried Eric.

"One reason was that he looked like it, and once I saw a handkerchief of his with a coronet upon it."

"Was it an Earl's coronet?"

"Ah, that I cannot say, for I only caught a glimpse of it—it may have been an Earl's or a Duke's for aught I can tell. In any case, whether he lived by his wits or not, Mr. George was a gentleman."

"Would you kindly describe him to me?"

Dr. West did so, and the description tallied exactly with what Verrall fancied Lord Westlynn must have been when a young man.

"Did Mrs. George die suddenly?" was his next question.

"Yes; she gave birth to a child that only lived a few hours, and then she died."

"Her husband was with her, I suppose?"

"He was not," returned the doctor, with a peculiar intonation. "A young lady who was called Miss Smith, or Brown, or Jones, or Robinson (I forget which), and who, I believe, was her sister, was the only person present at her death, and she it was who paid the bills, and saw to funeral arrangements, and, in fact, did everything afterwards."

"And she took away the child?"

"Yes."

"Can you give me the date of her departure from Elvaston?"

The doctor went to his surgery to look at a book, and on his return gave the month, although he could not, of course, fix the day. Eric consulted his pocket-book, and found that the date tallied, within a week or two, with that mentioned by his foster-mother as the time of his being given into her charge.

Surely he was on the right track now!

"I am going to put a very delicate question to you, Dr. West, but I beg you will answer it candidly," said the young man. "Is it your opinion that Mr. and Mrs. George were married?"

The doctor coughed and looked uncomfortable.

"It is an awkward question, certainly, but as you have asked me to be candid I will tell you what I really think, which is—that they were not married."

"Thank you," returned Eric, after a hardly perceptible pause. "I am afraid you are right. You have told me that you only saw Mr. George once. Surely he came to Elvaston after his wife's—his reputed wife's, I should say—after her death?"

"Yes, he did, some six weeks or two months afterwards, but I was away at the time, and he saw my *locum tenens*, who gave him my address. He wrote to me, asking particulars of his wife's last illness, and I told him all I knew."

"Have you his letter still?" exclaimed Verrall, eagerly.

"I believe I have, but it would take me some time to find it, for I haven't the slightest idea where it is. Do you want to see it particularly?"

"I do, for it would at once set at rest a question which is troubling me a good deal."

"Then I will find it," said the Doctor, good-naturedly. "I suppose you are staying in Elvaston for a day or two?"

"Until to-morrow, at any rate."

"And equally, of course, you put up at the 'Feathers'?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, I will make a thorough search before I go to bed to-night, and if I find the letter will send it round to you in the morning. Will that be soon enough?"

"Quite, thank you, and believe me I am very grateful for all the trouble I have given you."

"Don't mention it—don't mention it! I am delighted to have the opportunity of obliging you. Now, will you do me the honour of spending the evening with me?"

But this invitation Eric had to refuse, for he certainly did not feel in the mood for "social evening," where he would be expected to drink port wine, and listen to Dr. West's rather doubtful stories.

He had been more successful than he had fancied he would be, and was inclined to congratulate himself on the fact. Nevertheless, he did not pursue the inquiry in any spirit of hopefulness, for to what could it lead except the certainty of disgrace?

If Lord Westlynn was indeed his father then Fate had played him a strange trick in making him Arthur's friend, and taking him to Dering Court. In his own mind he felt hardly any doubt that this was so, and now those mysterious messages that had so greatly puzzled him were explained; for if they had not proceeded from the Earl himself then Lady Hawksley must have been their origin-

ator, and thus her wish to get him out of the country was accounted for.

The "Feathers" presented a very cheerful appearance when Eric returned to it, and formed a great contrast to the gloom and mirk of the wintry evening. The gas was lighted in all the rooms, and its radiance streamed out ruddily through the crimson blinds; while the open door revealed a cheerful glow of fire-light in the bar parlour, where Mrs. Sibley sat in the midst of her punch bowls, lemons, and coloured claret glasses.

There was an air of bustle and excitement about the comfortable old inn that immediately struck Verrall as something fresh. A chambermaid was tripping blithely along the passages, "boots" was rushing at a headlong pace upstairs, and on the landlady's comely face rested an expression of satisfied importance.

The latter came forward to meet Eric with a courtesy.

"I am sorry I have not been able to go to Susan Lloyd's, sir; but a visitor has arrived during your absence, and my time has been taken up in consequence."

"Oh, don't apologise, Mrs. Sibley!—it does not matter in the least, I assure you," returned Eric, passing on.

He was stopped by his hostess.

"If you please, sir, our fresh visitor—which it is a lady—told me to give her compliments to you, and ask you to go to her directly you came back. She is in number nine, and I will show you the room if you wish."

#### CHAPTER XXXIII.

AFTER SIR DOUGLAS ST. JOHN'S interview with his daughter he leaned back in his chair, and thought with regret of the obstinate prejudice she had become possessed of with regard to Colonel Fanshawe. For his part, he liked the officer, who—to do him justice—had always shown his best side to the baronet.

Sir Douglas did not feel well—the bilious attack of the day before had left him weak; the discovery of Lucy's theft that same morning had excited him, and now he felt both languid and feverish. His head was heavy as lead, and his throat was sore. He strove for some time against the lassitude that was oppressing him, then rang the bell, and desired to see his host.

In a few minutes the officer came to him.

"I want to speak to you about my own health," said Sir Douglas, in a faint voice. "I am not feeling at all well, and I don't wish my daughter to become aware of my indisposition, because I know it would frighten her. Is there a doctor near here?"

"Not nearer than five miles, and I don't think much of his skill. But tell me your symptoms, and perhaps I shall be able to prescribe for you. You know I walked the hospitals before I decided on becoming a soldier, and I may say my knowledge of medicine is not a mean one."

This was no idle boast, as Sir Douglas was well aware, and he thereupon told Fanshawe of the pain in his head and throat. The latter felt his pulse and looked at his tongue, then took his temperature.

"You are feverish," he observed, gravely, "and your symptoms may be either those of small-pox or scarlet fever. Don't be alarmed, for although one of these diseases may threaten you, on the other hand, your indisposition may mean nothing more serious than a bad cold."

"I am not alarmed for myself," replied Sir Douglas, who, however, had grown very pale. "It was of Ida I was thinking."

"Miss St. John had better keep away from you; at least, that is what I should advise, until we are quite sure there is no danger of infection."

"Certainly. Will you tell her so?"

Colonel Fanshawe looked dubious.

"I will tell her so if you like, but I very much doubt whether she will pay any attention to what I say. Keep your door locked to prevent her coming in, and when she asks

admittance tell her your reasons for refusing. She will be sure to be very indignant at being kept away from you."

"I dare say she will," said the Baronet, with a fond smile, "but you may depend on my being firm where her health is at stake."

"You had better go to bed at once, and I will make up a cooling mixture. I have a medicine chest in the house, which I keep in cases of emergency. It is necessary where you are so far away from a doctor."

Thus it happened that when Ida went to her father's room that same afternoon—after she had been partially mesmerized by the officer—she was told by the Baronet that she could not come in, and her utmost persuasions were powerless to induce him to change his decision.

The next day the scene was repeated, and with the same result, for by this time a red rash had come out on the Baronet's skin, and he was now convinced that he had scarlet fever.

It did not seem to be of a particularly malignant kind, and being satisfied as to Fanshawe's skill, he had determined to allow him to treat it without calling in the aid of a physician.

Still, he resolved that so long as there was any danger of infection he would not see his daughter, who had never had the disease, and would be therefore the more likely to take it. Keziah Hepburn had offered to nurse him, and he had gratefully accepted the offer.

It is needless to say that Ida was in very great trouble, not entirely on her father's account, for she did not in the least believe the fever would prove fatal, but on her own. Ever since the day when Fanshawe had so confidently asserted he was her master she had felt his influence over her increasing, and in such a subtle manner that it was quite impossible to resist it.

If she were sitting in a room alone some intuition would tell her he was near, and under the basilisk gaze of his dark eyes she felt as much fascinated as the bird when it sees the deadly coils of the serpent approaching.

Her own wish was to get away, but this was, by her father's illness, rendered impossible of achievement. She would have locked herself in the boudoir had not the key mysteriously disappeared, doubtless taken either by Fanshawe himself or by Keziah Hepburn, under his orders. The only bolt on the door was on the outer side, and thus she was met at all points.

"If we were only back in England! If we were only back in England!" she cried out aloud one day, wringing her hands in the impotence of her anguish.

Suddenly a change came over her appearance; her hands dropped limply at her side, her attitude grew listless and inert; and turning round in obedience to some strange power, which seemed to come both from without and within, she found herself confronted by Fanshawe.

He laughed in his low, peculiar fashion as he closed the door.

"So you want to go back to England, my pretty Ida?" he exclaimed. "Why are you so anxious to quit the Chateau Vert?"

"Why is the bird who has been used to liberty all its life so anxious to escape from its cage?" she returned, passionately, and with a flicker of her old vigour, which had lately deserted her. "I hate this place!"

"You are not complimentary to me."

"I did not intend to be so."

"But I like your rudeness, Ida; it is more charming to me than the smiles and soft words of other women. Do you know that?"

She did not reply, and he added, with a mocking smile,—

"Seat yourself, Miss St. John, for I wish to talk to you seriously."

She took the chair indicated, not without a mental protest. If there had been a third person present her will would not have been subdued by his; for, strange to say, it was

only when they were alone that his influence was so strong.

"Listen to me," he said, seating himself opposite, and bending forward so that he could look fully into her eyes. "I have resolved that you shall become my wife, and whether you will or no, I shall marry you. Do you hear?"

"I hear."

"And you know I am capable of fulfilling my resolve, whatever the cost may be?"

Ida's heart sank.

"I know you are capable of anything—however wicked and unmanly."

"Well then, knowing this, why don't you make a graceful submission, and give me your hand willingly?"

"Never!" she exclaimed, with emphasis, and the next moment she burst into a storm of tears, hiding her face in her hands.

He watched her with a sardonic smile, almost as if the sight pleased him—as in effect it did, for it was a sign of weakness, and it indicated that his power over her was increasing.

He had perfect faith in himself, and before now he had conquered a will as indomitable as Ida's own—indeed, he was surprised she had held out so long against that mesmeristic force with which he was, unfortunately, gifted.

Few people have studied this vast subject of mesmerism, or animal magnetism, and fewer still comprehend the wonders it is capable of performing. True, there are certain natures impervious to it, but by far the greater number are liable to its domination—women more than men.

At length Ida dried her tears, and as soon as she had done so, Colonel Fanshawe spoke again.

"It is useless for you to deny that I can, in a measure, control you—you admit that to yourself, do you not?"

No answer.

"Silence means consent," he went on, after waiting a moment for her to speak. "The control increases every day, and at the end of a fortnight I shall have subdued you so completely that you will acquiesce in everything I suggest. I would rather have had a free and unbiassed promise from you, but as that could not be, I am content—half a loaf is better than no bread, you know."

"I will go to my father—I will tell him all," exclaimed Ida.

"You will do nothing of the sort," he answered, with a soft laugh, "for Keziah will not allow you to enter. True, you may scream out through the door, but you will not dare do that for fear of the consequences that would ensue to your father. No, Miss Ida, I have provided against all contingencies; your maid is away, the servants in the chateau would pay no attention whatever to anything you might say. The chateau itself is miles distant from any habitation, so I am not making an idle boast when I say you are completely in my power."

It was melodramatic, but for all that it was true, and a shudder ran through Ida's limbs as she realized it.

Physically she was not so strong as she had been, and this, taken in conjunction with having no air or exercise, had considerably strengthened Fanshawe's position, for through it she was the less able to combat his will. He saw he had made an effect on her, and so he rose to go, saying emphatically, as he left the room,—

"Mind this, Ida, in a fortnight's time you shall be my wife, by fair means or foul!"

The girl was absolutely stupefied by misery, and after his departure sat perfectly still, until the shadows of dusk began to lengthen.

The idea that a girl could be coerced into marrying a man she hated seemed in this nineteenth century of ours the very essence of absurdity; but in this particular case it was not so much absurd as terrible. The idea of flight suggested itself; but, in the first place, she could not escape from the house without being



seen—for she was aware a watch was kept on her movements—and, again, she did not like the idea of leaving her sick father. Nevertheless, she would have waived the latter objection if she had thought she would have any chance of getting away unobserved.

Unfortunately she had only about a pound in her possession, and that was in English money, which would not be accepted in this remote part of France, so here was an insurmountable obstacle, for Ida knew quite enough of the world to be aware that she could not get far without gold to help her on her way.

It was to Arthur she turned in her trouble, he would help her in spite of all that had happened, if only she could communicate with him!

But that was a forlorn hope, for Colonel Fanshawe himself put the letters in the bag, and it was not to be supposed for a moment that he would allow an epistle to Lord Daring to reach its destination.

Ida, who had never in her life before feared man, woman, or child—Ida, who had been the boldest and bravest of her sex, who had wished she had been a boy in order that she might pursue a life of danger, adventure, and excitement—now went to the other extreme, and felt an exaggerated terror towards Fanshawe. She overestimated his mysterious power, and by so doing rendered herself less able to cope with it.

As she sat shivering there in the dusk she heard a faint rattling sound on the window, to which, at first, she attached no importance; but when it was repeated, she listened attentively, and fancied someone must be throwing up gravel, or very small stones, with the object of attracting her attention.

Very cautiously she opened the window, and looking down saw the dark outlines of a man's figure on the terrace below.

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

The morning after Nadir's return from London, the Hindoo—as we will still call him—went to the inner of his two rooms, and looked over the store of drugs he kept in the glass-fronted cupboard.

Suddenly he touched a bell, which was almost immediately answered by Joan.

"Who has been here during my absence?" he asked.

"No one. Oh! yes; Miss Monkton came one day to look for a book."

"But the books are in the other room."

"Yes. I don't know whether she came in here or not, for she had scratched her finger, and I went to my bedroom to fetch a bit of linen to bind it up."

"Then she was here alone?"

"Yes, while I was away."

"And how long were you away?"

"About ten minutes. I couldn't find the rag I wanted, and so I had to look in a box for some old handkerchiefs, and that made me longer than I should have been."

As the housekeeper went out Nadir's brow contracted. The drugs had been moved, or, at least, he thought they had; and as no one had been in the room except Evelyn, suspicion pointed to her as the person who had moved them.

What could she want with his chemicals? he wondered. If it had been Hilda he would not have been so much surprised, seeing that she had taken lessons in chemistry, and was fond of making experiments; but her cousin, although she occasionally sat in the room when the lessons were given, professed neither to understand or care for them.

The Hindoo examined the phials carefully, but they all appeared to be intact; indeed, were so, for he held them up to the light, and if their contents had been diminished he would have seen it at once.

"It is all right; must be all right," he muttered aloud; but he was only half satisfied, and went down stairs to seek Evelyn, whom he found in the morning-room, restlessly turning

over the leaves of a magazine, which, however, she was in too feverish and impatient a state of mind to read.

In truth the girl at that particular time was much to be pitied, for each day, instead of lessening the remembrance of the humiliation she had suffered at Verrall's hands, only seemed to increase its sting.

That she was unhappy could be plainly seen by her face, where the lines had deepened, and the expression of firmness habitual to it had grown even more determined than of yore.

Nadir approached with his usual soft footsteps, and she did not see him until he was close at her side; then she started violently.

"Have I frightened you? I am sorry," he murmured in those soft tones that struck the ear as melodiously as falling water. "I only came down to ask you if you wanted to go to my cabinet again, as I shall be leaving the Castle to-night, and shall lock it."

"Your cabinet!" Evelyn repeated, apparently very much surprised at the remark.

"Why should I wish to go to it?"

"I don't know, only the bottles have been moved, and as you are the only person who has visited the room, I imagined you had been looking for something among them."

"Then your imagination has led you astray," the girl answered, coolly, and with some dignity of manner. "I went to your apartments for the purpose of getting a book which Hilda asked me to fetch her, but I did not even enter the second room where the cabinet is."

"I am very sorry. I beg your pardon," said Nadir, convinced that he had been mistaken, and really vexed that he had spoken. "My motive was simply to find out whether you wanted anything from the cabinet before I left."

"You are very kind. But," she added, as an afterthought, "is not the cabinet always locked?"

"No, it fastens with a spring, which secures it from intrusion, except from those who know how it acts. When it is locked it is, of course, doubly secure, as the spring is thereby prevented from working."

That night, after having been to the village in the afternoon, the Hindoo left the Castle, and the following week Hilda grew very much worse; she was so weak, indeed, that she had to take to her room, and, presently, to her bed.

Dr. Freeman was more and more at fault with regard to her malady, but still treated it as "loss of tone," and continued his tonics.

"I think," the young girl said to him one day when she felt rather worse than usual, "I think there must be something the matter with my heart, for occasionally it commences beating very fast, and I can't stop it by lying down."

"Palpitation often comes from weakness," Dr. Freeman told her; nevertheless, he sounded her with the stethoscope, and looked rather grave after the examination.

"I think I will change your medicine," he observed, "and you must be very particular in taking it regularly every three hours, night as well as day. We must get a nurse for you."

"Is it necessary?"

"Most decidedly it is. We cannot tax your cousin's."

"Certainly not," exclaimed Hilda, hastily, "but I was going to say we had a parlour-maid here who told me yesterday that she had been a hospital nurse for some time—until her health gave way, in fact. I suppose she thought I should probably require someone to attend to me, and she asked me if I would try her."

"Better send to London, and get one from a nursing institute," said the physician, wishing to be on the safe side.

"I would rather have this woman than a stranger," remarked Hilda, with gentle insistence. "She is very neat, and clean-looking, and speaks nicely. Will you see her?"

"I suppose I had better, since you desire it."

Presently the maid came up—a dark-featured, pale complexioned woman of rather more than thirty, who gave her name as Mary Goode, and who answered the doctor's questions with a quiet, but respectful, assurance that at once prepossessed him in her favour.

"I gave up nursing two years ago, because the sleepless nights were telling on my health," she said, in explanation of her present position; "but now I am quite strong again, and I should be glad to be allowed to wait on Miss Fitzherbert."

And so it was arranged. She proved a most excellent and careful attendant, and was successful in seeing that medicines were given with punctuality, and that the invalid had everything she wanted.

But in spite of this Hilda grew rapidly worse; she was in no pain, but her appetite was entirely gone, and she was as weak and helpless as a new-born babe.

Evelyn suggested that another physician should be called in consultation, but this Dr. Freeman shook his head. He was so very sure that his prescriptions were the best, and that if they were only given time they would be sure to produce a favourable effect.

"She will pull through all right," he said, cheerfully; and, self-opinionated as he was, he really believed it. "We must be patient. The peculiar action of the heart gave me a little uneasiness at first, but I do not attach any importance to it now. She is young, and youth is better than any medicine known to the Pharmacopoeia."

Mary Goode did not apparently share this belief, for she implored Hilda most earnestly to leave farther advice.

"Why should I?" murmured the young girl, in her low, faint tones. "I am rather a believer in Fate—what is to be will be, and if I am fated to die, no doctor in the world can save me."

"But you must not die—you must live!" cried the nurse, and in such an impassioned way that Hilda looked at her curiously.

"You seem to take a great interest in my recovery," she observed, in a half wondering manner.

"I do—the greatest possible interest. You are too young and good to leave the world yet. You have everything that can make life happy."

Hilda shook her head sadly.

"The heart knoweth its own bitterness," she said, more to herself than her companion. "If I lived I should try to make other people happy, but for my own sake I am quite content to die."

The nurse looked deeply distressed—much more so than was natural under the circumstances; for, after all, Hilda was little more than a stranger to her, Mary Goode not having been in her service more than a fortnight.

"I am sure there is not one in the Castle who would not be sorry to see Miss Monkton mistress in your place," added Mary, and as she spoke she kept her eyes fixed keenly on the patient.

Hilda started. Evelyn mistress of the Castle! Yes, that was what must happen if she died. The thought had never struck her before, but it brought a strange chill with it. Her cousin was certainly the last person who was fitted to be the proprietor of a large estate, and have the care of dependents.

Hilda, albeit accustomed to err on the side of charity rather than severity in the matter of judging people, knew quite well that Evelyn was selfish to the core, and cared for nothing except her own gratification.

"But I cannot prevent it—I cannot prevent it!" she exclaimed, and unconsciously she spoke aloud.

The nurse seemed to understand to what she alluded, for she said, quickly,—

"You might make a will."

At any other time the heiress would have



["I HAVE RESOLVED THAT YOU SHALL BECOME MY WIFE, AND I WILL MARRY YOU."]

been both surprised and annoyed at such a suggestion from one of her servants, but Mary Goode's words did not affect her in this way.

"Yes, I might make a will," she murmured, and was very thoughtful for some time afterwards. The idea had struck her that she would like to found a charity with half of her wealth, and the other half might go to Evelyn, who would then have no cause for complaint. Still it seemed to her that it was only fair to her cousin to tell her of this resolve, so she presently sent for Evelyn, and dismissed the nurse.

The latter did not go far away—only into dressing room adjoining, where she knelt down at the door, and carefully applied her ear to the keyhole. If Hilda had seen her in this attitude she might not have thought quite so highly of her nurse as she did at present.

"I want to talk to you, Evelyn, seriously," Hilda began, as soon as they were alone. "I am very, very ill. It has dawned upon me to-day for the first time that I shall die."

"Don't say that, Hilda! You are frightening yourself for nothing. You will soon be all right—Dr. Freeman says so."

"I think Dr. Freeman is mistaken," returned the sick girl, quietly; "but be that as it may, I want to be prepared for the worst, and so I am going to make a will."

"Make a will!" echoed Evelyn, shrinking back behind the bed curtains, in order to hide the ghastliness of her face.

If a bomb-shell had exploded at her feet it could not have startled her more, and its effect was all the greater, inasmuch as she had never anticipated the possibility of such a resolve.

"Yes," Hilda went on. "If I had lived I intended to build a home, where all old people, who had not enough money to keep them, might spend the rest of their days; and as I shall probably not be able to put this design

in execution, I shall leave half my fortune to trustees, who will build the home, and endow it. What do you think of my plan?"

"You are at liberty to do as you like with your own money," responded Evelyn, but, strive as she would, she could not infuse any cordiality into her voice.

Half of Hilda's fortune—half of the money that she had confidently looked forward to inheriting! The idea was abominable to her.

"The other half," continued her cousin, "will, of course, go to you, as you are my nearest—nay, only relation, and even then you will be a rich woman."

"I wish you would not talk of these things!" exclaimed Evelyn, irritably. "I don't want to look forward to your death—I am not anxious to possess your money!"

"No, I know you are not, but I thought it would be better to tell you my intentions rather than surprise you. In the morning I shall telegraph for Mr. Fox, who will make my will."

Neither Hilda nor her cousin remembered that the former was under twenty-one, and therefore incompetent to execute a will.

Evelyn did not speak for some time. There was a fire in the grate, and it had burned down to a scarlet glow, in the midst of which the shifting cinders fell into strange likenesses of forms and faces. What did Evelyn Monkton, with her brows making a level line above the Egyptian darkness of her eyes, think of as she gazed into them?

Suddenly the intense quiet was broken by a faint, monotonous sound like the ticking of a watch, only not quite so regular, and Hilda, who had closed her eyes, opened them and listened.

"Do you hear that?" she whispered, in a low, awed tone, that involuntarily made Evelyn shiver.

"Hear what? There is nothing to hear."

"Yes, there is—a low ticking. It is what

our old servant used to call the 'death watch.'"

To Hilda's surprise Evelyn burst into a storm of tears, and flung herself on her knees at the side of the bed.

"What is the matter—have I vexed you?" exclaimed the heiress, in perplexed pain at her cousin's emotion. "If I have I am very sorry."

"You should not say such things," Evelyn returned, vaguely; then she got up from her knees and tried to smile. "I don't like to hear you speak of death, Hilda. It is a dreadful reality, I know, but the less one thinks of it the better."

In this Hilda did not agree with her, for to our heroine death had lost its terrors. She wondered whether, in the dim future of which we know so little, she would meet Verrall, and how they would greet each other when the fetters and bonds of earth had been cast away!

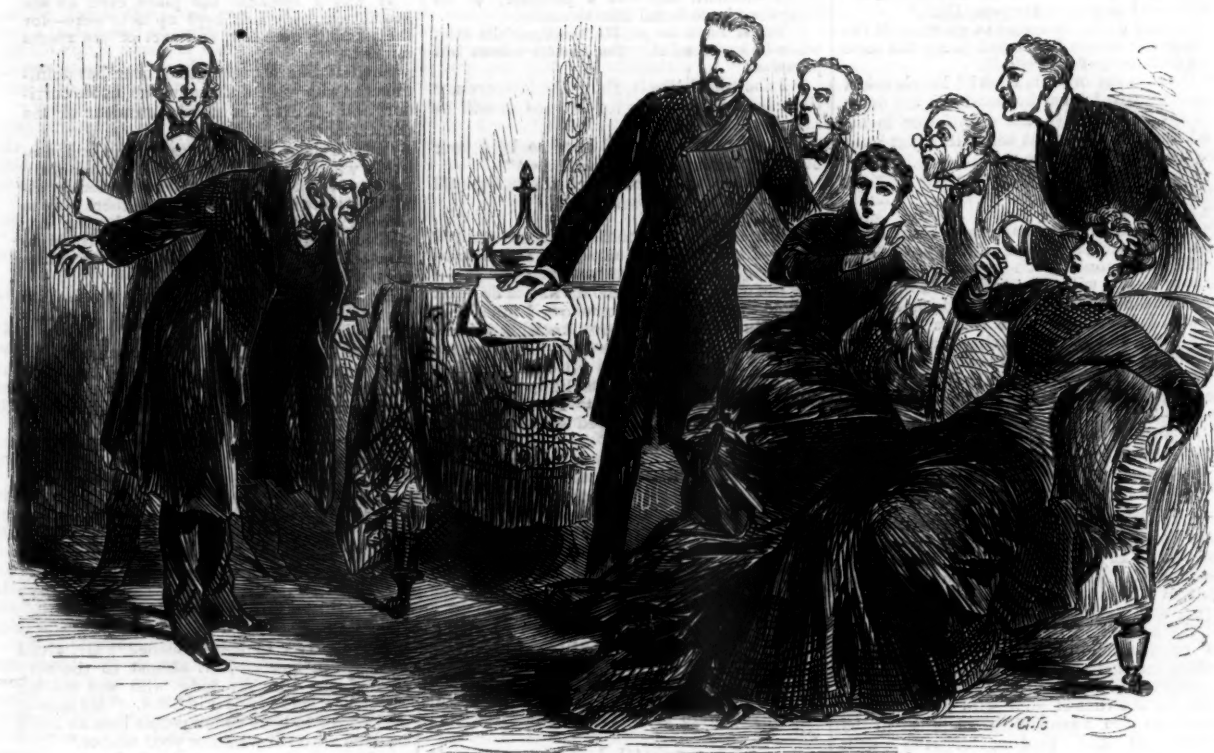
Somehow, these last few days, she had thought less of Eric's supposed treachery than of her love for him, and the fact that he had once saved her life.

In spite of all he was still her hero!

(To be continued.)

**FRIGHTENING A LEOPARD.**—In the Himalayas travelling is not so secure as journeying by road or rail at home. A leopard, for example, is not a pleasant kind of wayfarer to meet on the road. A recent visitor to these mountains tells how a traveller started to ride home one bright moonlight night, mounted on a white horse. Just as he turned a corner he saw in front of him a huge leopard prepared to spring. On this the traveller, who was unarmed, rose in his saddle, and shouted at the top of his voice. This had such an effect upon the leopard that he jumped over the bank, and was lost to sight in the distance.





["MR. ARLINGTON!" GASPED THE LAWYER. "ALIVE!"]

## NOVELETTE.]

## MR. ARLINGTON'S STEWARD.

## CHAPTER V.

"I've half a mind to cut the service altogether, Bessie."

"Good gracious, Dick. Why?" and Mrs. Hetheredge looked up at her husband from the mass of bright-coloured wool that she held in her lap and smiled. "Why should you cut it, dear? We are quite happy here—at least I am."

"And that makes me feel as if I were a discontented sort of party," the Corporal said, stroking his wife's bright hair and finishing the caress with a kiss; "and perhaps I am. I don't mean to be, but I can't bear to see my wife, my little lady, brought down to the level of these quarters. If I could afford to live outside now."

"But you can't, and you know that very well, sir. Besides, I don't know that I should care to live outside. I have all I want here, and there isn't half the occasion for spending that there would be if we lived in the town; and as for the quarters, well, they are outside our door. It is our own private mansion, and we can make believe that there isn't a soldier within a mile if we like when the door is shut."

"Oh, can we?" Dick Hetheredge said, with a little laugh as the short, sharp tramp of the guard relieving the sentry went by the end of the quarters; and almost at the same time the noise of a scuffle overhead made itself heard. Bangs and exclamations and the smash of at least one article of domestic crockery, and then a woman's voice in unmistakably Irish bewailing.

"Doesn't all that smack of the barracks, eh, Bessie?"

"Oh! that only Mrs. Callaghan and her Pat. They will be the best of friends in half-an-hour. It amuses them to smash things, and

it doesn't hurt us. Why are you so anxious to get out to-night? Has anybody worried you?"

"No one more than usual," Dick replied. "Sergeant Philips has bought his discharge, and I think I was envying him a little. He is going into a good berth."

"But you have not enough money, Dick?"

"No, dear, but the Captain was talking to me about it a little while ago. You see he knows a little and guesses more, and he thinks both you and your husband are thrown away here. He was good enough to say so, and to offer to help me if I would like to get out of it. I told him that I did not care to do anything unless my wife went in with me in the notion. I thought you would jump at the offer, Bessie."

"I don't think I do, Dick. I am content for the present—at any rate," Bessie replied. "If we could begin the world without any debt of that sort I should not so much mind, but I am safe and happy here. I can work or not as pleases me, and I should have more responsibilities outside. Don't think of it just yet, Dick—not till"—he drew her to him and kissed her. A time was coming when her share of the daily providing would come to an end, when their little home would have yet another inmate, and they were proud and happy in the prospect.

"I should feel lonely and frightened if we went out now," Bessie said, after a pause; "and the women are very kind to me, and it is something to have a house over one's head free of rent and taxes. When I am about again we will talk of it. Don't you think I am right?"

"You are always right, dear, but I should like to see you in a place of your own, and not wearing yourself to death over this rubbish."

"Rubbish, sir! Do you know what this is?"

"It looks to me more like a mass of tangled wrcsteds and crumpled rags than anything

else," Dick Hetheredge replied. "About fit for the rag bag."

"Oh, you heathen!" said Bessie, gaily; "it is an embroidered chair-cover for the Lady Alethea Cardonnell, the Earl of Halesowen's daughter. She got it into a mess, and I have to finish it for her. The Earl is to be told it is his daughter's work—and so it is—part of it. These hideous blue flowers—like nothing on earth. I shall pick them all out. Sit up off it, dear boy. You will crease it worse than ever with your elbows."

"I should like to put it behind the fire," Dick grumbled. "When I want my wife it seems to me that she is always hidden in a tangle of wools or embroidery cotton. Put it away for to-night and let us talk. I—who's there?"

"Post," replied a voice outside. Someone had struck the door sharply with a stick, and Dick got up from amongst his wife's work and opened it.

"Letter for you," the post-corporal said; "hope you've come into a fortune."

"Why?"

"It's a lawyer's letter; they either mean mischief or money in a general way. How's the missis?"

"Quite well, thank you," answered Bessie for herself. "How is Mrs. Wendall?"

"All right, thank you. Getting on nicely."

"And the baby?"

"I don't know," the Corporal replied, with a grimace. "I suppose he's all right. There don't seem much of him except voice at present. He lets the world know he has come into it," and with a laugh and a merry "good-night" the post-corporal departed to knock at the next door, while Dick and Bessie looked wonderingly at the blue envelope the former held in his hand.

"Mischief or money, which is it, I wonder?" Dick said. "Burnley and Ledwitch? What can they want with me? Mischief I doubt."

"Being lawyers, naturally," Bessie said demurely. "I don't like lawyers, Dick."

"Neither do I. It seems to me that all the disagreeable letters I ever had in my life have come from lawyers, Bessie."

"What is the matter, Dick?" Bessie asked in amazement, for her husband had sat down in front of her with the open letter in his hand, and was staring at her with a perplexed face that was unusual to see.

"He is dead."

"Who?"

"The old man."

"Oh! Dick, and you have never seen him?" made it up with him after all?"

"There wasn't much to make up, dear. He was angry with me, and I had begun to hope somehow that the day would come when he would know how little reason for anger there was, and what a darling little wife he was objecting to. That was all."

"I am so sorry, so sorry," Bessie said, with the tears in her eyes. "If it had not been for me—"

"I should have been a good-for-nothing creature if I had not met you, my darling," Dick said. "The old man must have left us something. Listen."

"Sir,—We have to announce to you the decease of our client, Mr. Rupert Arlington, who died at Tangiers on the fifteenth of last month. By his own request no announcement of the death was made in any English paper, and we were in ignorance of the fact till the arrival in this country of Mr. Good, his confidential servant. Mr. Good had written instructions from his deceased master, in accordance with which we request your attendance and that of your wife at Arlington Manor on the twenty-fifth instant, to be present at the reading of the will. We may mention that the document in question will not be opened unless you are present as well as Mr. and Mrs. Mervyn Arlington. Mr. Good informs us that his master before his death expressed a wish that you should be at the Manor two days before the one set apart for the opening of the will. The requests are rather eccentric, and so far as we know do not relate to any inheritance; but we should counsel your acceding to them. Mr. Good desired us to enclose a cheque for ten pounds, being unaware of your exact position or means, and looking upon your presence as imperative. Trusting you will arrive at Arlington not later than the evening of the 22nd inst., we have the honour to be Yours faithfully,

"BURNLEY AND LEDWICH.

"Richard Arlington, Esq."

"And Corporal Hetheredge on the outside," Dick said, when he had read the letter to his wife. "Someone must have watched me pretty closely to know all about me in that fashion. What is to be done, Bessie? This is the 20th."

"Go to the captain at once!" Bessie said, decidedly, "and ask him. He will help you."

"I don't know. There are a good many on leave just now, and he may not be able. I'd rather not go. What is Arlington Manor to me? I don't want to meet that sneaking prig, Mervyn Arlington, and his stuck-up wife. You are worth a dozen of her, my Bessie."

"I wish I was as far as money is concerned," Bessie said with a laugh, and a little sigh after it. "She is very rich, is she not?"

"Pretty well, I believe. But I would not have her if she were a female Croesus; I have heard of her. My cousin Mervyn has not an easy time of it, I know."

"I hope she will be civil to me. I don't think I can stand much bullying!"

"You shan't be bullied, child, trust me for that. She will not try it on twice where my wife is concerned!"

Dick Hetheredge went to the captain's rooms with the letter in his hand. Luckily or him Captain Dornon had met with a

slight accident, and was a prisoner, or he might not have found him so easily.

"You'll have to go, Hetheredge," he said, when he had read it, "the matter seems imperative!"

"I don't half like it, sir. The lawyers say there is no money in it for me, and it will be awfully disagreeable."

"Yes, I expect you will have to hold your own for yourself and your wife too!"

"I can do that, sir; but I think I should refuse but for two things."

"What are they?"

"One is that I should like to see the old place—I knew it years ago when I used to be told that I should be its master some day—and the other is that I should like to do what the old man bid me. Somehow, I have been cherishing the hope without knowing it that he would forgive me some day—(not leave me his money)—I know that all was over, but let me introduce Bessie to him, and shake hands with one more man! That letter was a shock to me! I had hoped without knowing how much, and now—"

"Ah! I understand," Captain Dornon said. "Such disappointments come to us all sometimes. Shall I get that cheque cashed for you, Hetheredge? The name will tell nothing here, but your doing it might set tongues going, and I suppose you do not want that?"

"I shall be very glad if you will, sir," the Corporal said. "I suppose I ought to take it? I could pay for the journey myself, but—"

"I should take all that was offered me if I were you. You are going to obey a dead man's instructions, and this cheque is part of them. I wish you were going to the inheritance as well."

"I don't know that I do," Dick said. "If I had remained the heir I should not have been as happy as I am now—I should not have had Bessie!"

"Ah! Bessie has atoned for all, has she?"

"For everything, sir. I would rather have her and our little room here than Arlington Manor with the lady on whose account I lost it!"

"Do I know her, I wonder?"

"I think you do, sir. My cousin has married her."

"Julia Clitheroe! Surely your uncle did not intend you to marry her?"

"He asked me to, sir; he only knew her by repute I believe. But there was something about some property that made him wish for the match. I wouldn't have had her to be made king of England!"

"Nor I; but that is between ourselves. Mr. Mervyn Arlington is doubtless a very happy man."

"A very obedient one, I hear, 'sir," said Dick Hetheredge, laughing in a fashion that made the captain's servant, who came in at the moment, declare that "he never heard such goings on in his life! Corporal Hetheredge was carrying on just as if he were the captain's equal, and was that bumptious he might have been a lord!"

There was much speculation on the cause of the corporal getting a week's leave out of the regular order of things, and some very unpleasant remarks made amongst the men. But Dick Hetheredge and his Bessie were out of hearing of them, and on their way to Arlington Manor, outwardly brave, but in their hearts rather dismayed at the prospect of meeting the heir and his very much better-half.

## CHAPTER VI.

MRS. MERVYN ARLINGTON felt as if her wildest dreams of ambition were being realised as she sat at breakfast in the morning-room at the Manor the day after her arrival. She had longed for the old place, and helped her husband to scheme to win it, but she had no idea of its magnificence, or of the amount of hoarded wealth that its inheritance would bring with it.

It was a splendid old place, even as she saw it now, only half kept up as it were—for the servants were few, and part of the rooms unused.

She felt like a queen going over her dominions as she walked through the noble corridors and admired the stately grandeur of the decorations.

"Mr. Good," as he was called in the household, where he seemed to be almost as a master, was deferential and scrupulously attentive, showing her everything there was to remark about the place, and obeying her slightest whim with a grave solicitude to please that was almost touching in its politeness.

He met the pair on the step in the fashion of an old chamberlain, and bowed low and humbly.

"Mr. Mervyn Arlington, I presume?" he said, in a voice that seemed slightly cracked, addressing his dead master's nephew.

"I am Mervyn Arlington," that gentleman replied.

"And master here," his lady said. "Who are you?"

"I was the late Mr. Arlington's confidential servant," was the quiet reply. "I am here in obedience to his last instructions—in his name I bid you welcome to this house."

"Ah! thanks," Mervyn Arlington said, looking round him with anxiety and pride.

"And these are the servants, I suppose; very few for such a house as this!"

"The household is waiting your pleasure and the lady's to be remodelled," Mr. Good said, again bowing low, almost to the very feet of the haughty lady who was staring about her, gold eyeglass in hand. "My master desired me to have as few people here as could be done with till we knew your wishes."

"Your master was very kind, I am sure," the gentleman replied, with a suspicion of scorn in his voice. "But I am master now, and we will alter all that. You can come to me for instructions now, my good fellow. We will relieve you of your responsibility."

"Not till after the reading of the will," the servant said, with so much dignity in his tone that the husband and wife stared at him with mutual astonishment. "The instructions are very decisive, and—"

"And the old lunatic who issued them is dead," Mrs. Arlington said, snappishly; "and if you think we are going to be ordered about by you, or anybody like you, you are very much mistaken. Which of these people is my maid? I did not bring one."

"I was not requested to provide a lady's maid," Mr. Good said, quietly. "My master had very little experience of a lady's wants, but I know there is a girl here who can undertake the duties,—I inquired; Lucy, this lady desires your attendance. Here is a man who will valet you if you wish it," he continued, addressing the new master of the house, "that is, if you have come unattended."

"I have. I thought, perhaps, that you would do me the honour to see to my wants."

"I?"

Mr. Good uttered the monosyllable in a tone of intense scorn, and a look of rage passed over his face, vanishing almost as quickly as it appeared.

"Yes, you; why not? You were my uncle's own man, were you not?"

"Surely I was, 'sir," the old servant said, with a smile. "I was with him so long that I suppose that I cannot think of myself as anyone else's servant. You would find me rather old-fashioned in my ways, I am afraid, 'sir. This man will suit you much better."

"I don't care who it is so he knows his business," Mr. Arlington said, carelessly. "They can go now, Good. We must have a good many more and better-looking people. Such a set of country gorgons will hardly suit the style I mean to keep up here, I can tell you."

The new master and his wife were discussed pretty freely by the gorgons in question when they were safe in their rooms, and the general opinion was not favourable. The lady's maid



*pro tem* came down and said that her lady was a tartar, and no mistake. And the valet did not think much of his master, declared he was henpecked, and that the lady ruled him with a rod of iron.

"We are all to go," he said, as soon as ever they can make arrangements. "You especially, Mr. Good. The lady called you an old fox, and said you had mischief in your head. You are to go directly."

"I am not going till I have fulfilled my master's behests," Mr. Good said, quietly. "After that the lady may get rid of me as soon as she pleases—if she can, if she can."

"I suppose she can—she will be mistress here, will she not?"

"We never know what may happen," Mr. Good said, in the same quiet tone; and then he withdrew to his own particular den, a little room set apart for him according to the lawyer's instructions, and they saw him no more in the servants' hall.

"That man shall go at once," Mrs. Arlington said, over her breakfast the next morning, putting down her cup with an angry thud.

"What man?" asked her husband. "I think I shall get rid of the lot, and begin afresh in my own fashion. I don't like old servants. Which particular one do you mean?"

"That horrid Good; he gives me the nightmare! He seems always to be prowling about, and it is as if he read one's very thoughts. I wish you would send him away to-day, Mervyn."

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure, my dear; but we are under orders still, it seems, till this ridiculous farce of the will-reading is over. I wish the old man had not made that ridiculous proviso about the other Arlingtons. He must have been a little mad."

"A little!" Mrs. Arlington echoed, scornfully; "he could only have been fit for Bedlam. Of course it is only to finish Dick Arlington's punishment; to give him a taste of further humiliation by showing him and his fool of a wife what they have lost. He shall be humiliated to his heart's content."

"No doubt he will if you take it in hand," her husband remarked, with a smile; "you will not spare him. He would have none of you, you know."

"Don't be coarse, Mr. Arlington, if you please," the fair Julia said, viciously. "Look there; where is that carriage going? That is not the one that met us last evening; it is a handsomer one. Who is using it?"

"You had better ring and ask."

She rang with an impatient hand, making a peal that reverberated through the house, and made the servants start.

"She is a tartar, and no mistake," was the remark in the lower regions, as the footman hastened up to see what was wanted.

"What carriage is that?" asked Mrs. Arlington as he appeared, pointing to a handsome barouche and pair outside the window.

"It is going to the station, madam, to meet—"

"Who ordered it?" she asked, without allowing him to finish his sentence.

"Mr. Good, madam."

"Send Mr. Good to me before that carriage starts, do you hear? We shall see who is to be master and mistress here; I will not have it sent to meet those people. Let him know that I say so."

"Very good, madam."

The man departed, and reported to Mr. Good that the lady had countermanded the carriage, and desired his presence immediately.

"Go round and tell John to drive away directly," the old servant said. "I have been obeying orders in sending him; I will see Mrs. Arlington directly. I am not afraid of her."

He smiled as he heard the carriage drive off and the bell of the breakfast-room ring violently at the same time.

"Her ladyship is indignant," he said to himself. "Ah, well! after the twenty-fifth she

can storm as she pleases; it will not affect Samuel Good. I shall have vanished then."

He bowed low as he entered the room where the lady sat, with an affectation of extreme humility; and the lady turned upon him snappishly.

"Mr. Good," she said, "you are taking a great deal upon yourself."

"As how, madam?"

"In giving orders. Who told that coachman to drive away?"

"I did."

"Are you master here?"

"In a manner I am, until after the twenty-fifth. My instructions were very explicit. In sending that carriage to meet Mr. and Mrs. Richard Arlington I am acting under orders."

"Why was it not sent to meet us?"

"I had no orders about meeting you, madam. I did as I knew my master would have done had he been alive. I had directions about the carriage this morning. I am simply obeying them."

He bowed again, and Mrs. Arlington felt as if she would have liked to box his ears, and have a fit of hysterics; but she deferred both operations, resolving to make up for all she was suffering by-and-by, when the time came for her to turn Mr. Samuel Good and his following out of the house altogether.

"After all it is only to make those two idiots feel their position more keenly at the last," her husband said, when they were alone again. "My uncle always declared that he would punish that ungrateful fellow in every possible way, and all this attention to them is only part of it. Wait till I am master, and they shall see."

"Wait till I am mistress!" his wife said, spitefully. "It will be the proudest moment of my life when I stand at yonder door and order that stuck-up fool off my premises. He will repent his insults to me when he sees me with the winning cards in my hand."

"H'm, perhaps," Mr. Arlington said. "I believe he is quite infatuated with his wife. I have heard something of them lately. He does not know that I know what he has been doing and where he has been. His father's son a common soldier! Bah! the thought of it is sickening!"

"It is an insult to insist on our meeting them in this equality. I shall not sit down to table with them while they are here. A fellow smelling of the stable, and a servant girl! It is too disgusting!"

"I am afraid you will have to keep your room then. This Good seems to have explicit directions about what is to be done, and he is not the sort of man to disobey orders. If I read him aright, I expect that we shall find he is down for a good thing in the will."

"I wish he was dead, I do," Mrs. Arlington said, spitefully, and if wishes could kill, Samuel Good would have been in a bad way from that moment.

She felt in a false position somehow. The servants were most obsequious, taking their tone from the old man who had been with their master so long; but there was no heart in their obedience and humility. They saw through her, and knew that when she was mistress their stay would be short.

"Here they are!" Mr. Arlington said, presently, as the carriage came up the avenue, "and the lawyer with them, I declare! You will have to be civil to them now, Mrs. A., whether you like it or not."

"I can wait," the lady said, with a disagreeable smile; "it is only for two days. Are you going to welcome them to Arlington? You don't expect me to hold out my hand to that man and his low-born wife, do you?"

"Do as you please, of course," he said, "but I should advise you to be polite. It is ill-bred to be unpleasant to visitors."

"They are not my guests; they are that old idiot's visitors," the fair Julia replied, as her husband went into the hall to greet his cousin, if not to give him welcome.

Samuel Good was before him, bowing low as he had done to himself and wife, and bid-

ding Dick Hetheredge, the corporal, welcome to Arlington in the name of his dead master.

Mrs. Arlington, peeping through the half-closed door to see the vulgar creature of her imagination, saw in the lowly wife a slim, graceful girl, who moved and spoke like a lady, and who did not seem at all abashed at the grandeur of the mansion, or the array of servants who were drawn up in the hall, much to the elder lady's disgust.

"Well, I never!" she exclaimed, as she watched the girl return the greeting of her husband and the old servant with perfect self-possession. "She must have been an actress! But you shall pay for your airs, my lady. You shall pay for them, or my name is not Julia Arlington."

## CHAPTER VII.

BESSIE found her position at Arlington Manor very much more endurable than she had anticipated. The servants all treated her with the greatest respect, seemingly taking their tone from Mr. Samuel Good, who was polite in the extreme; but with a very different sort of politeness from that which he showed to Mrs. Mervyn Arlington.

To that lady he was obsequious to a degree. He appeared to wish to anticipate her slightest wish, and was constant in his endeavours to make the servants do everything as she desired it should be done. He listened patiently to her aggravating twaddle, and her most arrogant commands, and bowed so low when he entered and left her apartments, that it seemed as if he wished to brush the ground with his forehead in his self-abasement in her presence.

She could complain of nothing. She was treated as if she were a queen, and yet, as she told her husband, she was possessed with a curious desire to annihilate Mr. Samuel Good. She detested him, and longed for the day when she might bid him leave the house and never return to it. She told Mr. Burnley something of her feeling towards the faithful servant of the dead, and the lawyer laughed pleasantly. She would soon have it all her own way, he told her, and then she could rid herself of Mr. Good, and anyone else she did not approve of.

"That I shall, and very quickly," she said, scornfully. "I can't think why Mr. Arlington subjected us to all this discomfort and humiliation to have to entertain that low woman and her husband. Poor infatuated fool! What could he see in her to admire, I wonder?"

"You are speaking of Mrs. Richard Arlington?" Mr. Burnley said, quietly.

"Yes. Who else should I be talking of? That vile woman who—"

"Pardon me, there is some mistake. Mrs. Arlington is neither vile nor low, as you were pleased to call her just now. She is the daughter of a physician; poor enough, and friendless but for her husband; but quite your social equal, madam, for all that."

He inclined his head, and left her; and she had the long-threatened hysterics, and vowed vengeance on him as well as on the unoffending Bessie. She would turn them all out; not one of them should ever set foot in the Manor House again when once the will was read. She tried to get out of the lawyer and the confidential servant also what the contents of the document were; but if they knew they would tell nothing.

She dared not be openly uncivil to the wife of her husband's cousin, but she never missed a chance of talking at her, and endeavouring to make her uncomfortable by remarks on her dependent position and the short stay she was likely to make at Arlington Manor.

Mervyn Arlington was agreeably surprised at his cousin's demeanour and the charming modesty and self-possession of his wife. He found Bessie a well-informed woman, charming to converse with, and far better mannered than his own imperious better half.

He had the grace to hold out his hand to Richard when the pair alighted at the door,

and say a few hesitating words of half welcome. He felt the awkwardness of the position, and how like mockery it seemed to bid a man welcome whom you are going to see turned out within forty-eight hours!

He knew his wife's spiteful feelings towards the pair, and was sure that from the moment of Arlington actually passing into their hands Bessie and her husband would have no place there; and he felt angry with the dead man for making such uncomfortable arrangements, and with the lawyer and Mr. Good for carrying them out to the letter in the way they were doing.

"I am not responsible," Mr. Burnley said, when Mr. Arlington made some remark on the discomfort of the position. "My instructions were so explicit that I could not refuse to obey them. To-morrow will see all straight."

"I hope so, I am sure," the gentleman returns, with an uneasy feeling that something might happen to make all crooked. "By the way, who is Good—the servant?"

"Yes. I know nothing of him more than I have learned from himself. I know that he has been in your uncle's service for a great many years, and that he was regarded almost as a friend and companion, being in Mr. Arlington's confidence to a great extent. I fancied he was a younger man; but I only saw him once many years ago, and that was in the twilight, so I may have been mistaken."

"He is quite an old fellow—older than his master was, I should say?"

"He says they were both about the same age. He looks older than he actually is from the whiteness of his hair. He is really a picturesque old man."

"He looks like an artist's model," Mr. Arlington remarked, as Samuel Good passed the window, talking to Bessie, who had taken wonderfully to him, and chatted with him about her life and her husband's prospects as if he were her father.

She could hardly believe he was only a servant, she told Dick; he was so superior in his manners and conversation.

He was a fresh-coloured old man, with a very lined face and snow-white hair and beard. He has been allowed to wear the latter as he liked, and it well-nigh concealed his face; his hair was long, and he wore a loose coat that had something the look of a Jew's outer garment.

"I believe he is a Jew," Mrs. Mervyn Arlington said, joining her husband and the lawyer, and breaking in on their conversation. "Anyway, he is a horrid old goblin, and after to-morrow he shan't stay a night in the place."

"I suppose you will let him know it in time, madam?"

"Oh! he knows it already. I have made him understand that I can't bear him. I hated him from the moment I saw him bowing and scraping there on the doorstep like a bewitched baboon. It is sickening to see that woman trying to curry favour with him as she does. You must be mistaken in her origin, Mr. Burnley; no lady such as you represent her to be would consort with servants in that fashion."

"Mr. Good is a very superior man," the lawyer replied, quietly; "he is very well informed. And Mrs. Richard Arlington is completely shut off from any company of her own class. You will pardon my making the remark, but you yourself have ignored her so completely that she must either be dumb or talk to the servants or myself."

"She has no business to come at all," the lady replied, with a toss of her shapely head. "But it will be all over to-morrow, thank goodness!"

"It will; and if there is not a complete revolution here I never guessed at a man's character yet," the lawyer said to himself as Mr. and Mrs. Arlington left the room, the lady slamming the door after her, as if she loved to emphasise her words by some outside aid.

Mr. Burnley had no notion of the contents of the will that he had come to Arlington to read. He had made one for his client many years before, in which Richard Arlington was made the heir. But that document had been destroyed, and he had not seen his client since. He had transacted a good deal of business for him, and knew better than anyone the amount that would come to the lucky person who inherited Arlington and its revenues; but of the will of which his confidential servant spoke he knew nothing.

"It may not stand," he said to himself. "I earnestly hope it won't if it is an unjust one; they ought to inherit equally."

"I shall die if all this nonsense is not over soon," the fair Julia said to her husband, when they were once more in the seclusion of their own apartments. "How dare they bring that cat of a woman and that low fellow of a cousin of yours to meet me? I will turn every servant out of the place to-morrow night, and that sneaking lawyer at the head of them. Don't laugh at me, Mervyn; it is too disgusting."

"It isn't pleasant, certainly, my dear," Mervyn Arlington replied; "but we may as well put up with it quietly for the rest of the time. At noon to-morrow we shall be master and mistress here. But I think I would put off the wholesale departure of the servants if I were you till I was sure where any more were coming from. Arlington is rather an awkward place to bring a household to all in a minute."

"They shall go if I do the work of the place myself," the lady said, and then burst into passionate, ill-tempered tears, as her husband broke into a laugh at the notion of his fine lady wife alone in that great house with no one to help her.

"Don't make yourself ridiculous," he said, sharply, and the tears were indignantly dried, and Mrs. Arlington went on with her dressing in a huff.

"I am glad I have met you, my dear," Samuel Good said to Bessie, as they walked up and down the terrace outside the house. "You don't mind my calling you my dear, do you? It is a liberty from me to you, I know; but I have had so much of my own way with my master that I am apt to forget that I am a servant. Your husband does not mind my speaking to you, does he?"

"I don't know who I should speak to if you did not talk to me sometimes," Bessie replied, with a smile, though the tears stood in her pretty eyes the while. "My husband's cousin and his wife say openly that we are not fit to sit down to table with them. And yet we are equals. His uncle wanted him to marry Mrs. Mervyn Arlington once, you know, and his refusal was the beginning of the quarrel between them. At least, it was not a quarrel. Dick was obstinate, that was all. You see, we loved each other, he and I, and he couldn't marry anyone else."

"Especially Miss Julia Clitheros," Mr. Good said, laughing, and laying his hand with a caressing touch on her bright hair. "It was not to be wondered at. So you two preferred poverty and each other to separation and an inheritance for him?"

"That we did."

"And you are content?"

"Quite. What a question to ask. Do we look discontented?"

"Not a bit. And you never quarrel?"

"Never."

"Nor find life hard?"

"Never. The most disagreeable thing that has ever happened to us since we were married has been coming here now. I can't think why you wanted us to come, Mr. Good! It seems as if it was only that we might be insulted."

Bessie's tears were falling now. She had borne a great deal quietly, and it was a relief to cry a little about it now.

"I only obeyed orders, my dear," the old servant said. "Whatever is right, you know,

and perhaps you may find this is right after to-morrow."

"It will be right when we are back in our home again," Bessie said. "I shall try and forget that I have ever seen Arlington or anyone belonging to it."

"That isn't polite to me. I thought you liked me, Mrs. Arlington."

"So I do, and it was very ungrateful of me to say such a thing, Mr. Good. Forgive me," and Bessie looked up appealingly. "But I hardly look upon you as belonging to Arlington—you are to go, you know."

"Yes—with the rest of them. I shall be quite ready when Mrs. Mervyn Arlington is in power, I can assure you. Her servants will have no sinecures in their places, I can see. A wonderful woman that—she will rule here like a man."

Bessie went to sleep that night with a curious feeling of unreality about everything. It seemed to her as if she must be dreaming when she woke and found that the day had arrived that was to make her husband's cousin master of the old place. The ordeal was nearly over, and they could go back and look upon all that had happened as a bad dream, and forget that there had ever been the slightest chance of their inheriting Arlington.

By Mr. Good's directions the library was prepared for the occasion, and a friend or two of the late master of the house were invited to be present. The clergyman of the parish, a gentle-looking, venerable old man, was there, and Mr. Burnley's partner summoned from London on purpose. Samuel Good was in the room when Richard Arlington entered with Bessie on his arm, and placed her beside his cousin's wife, who scarcely deigned to notice her presence.

Mrs. Mervyn Arlington was richly dressed in as deep mourning as was compatible with looking her very best. Black became her, and she was aware of it, and was on exceedingly good terms with herself, and very polite to Mr. Good now that his interference was so nearly over.

"We are all ready I think, Mr. Good," Mr. Burnley said, about ten minutes to twelve, when they were assembled; and he had mentally contrasted the cousins, and thought if only the old man could have seen his nephews he would have made a different arrangement of his property.

Bessie looked so truly a lady in her neat black silk, and her husband, in his well-fitting clothes, seemed so much more at his ease than his cousin, who was restless and embarrassed to a degree; overwhelmed, no doubt, by the sense of what was coming to him.

"Twelve o'clock was the hour named," the old man replied; "everything will be ready then."

"What does he mean by everything?" asked Mervyn Arlington's wife, as he left the room. "What airs he gives himself! But, thank goodness! it is over."

"Yes, it is over," the lawyer said, rising suddenly from his chair with a scared look as the door opened again, and admitted a fresh guest—a shrunken-looking, little old man in a brown coat, and with straggling grey hair, and keen eyes, with an amused expression in them.

Mervyn Arlington started from his seat with a suppressed oath, and Bessie felt her heart give a great jump, for it was the curious old man who had asked her so many questions in Fulhampton streets. Her husband turned very pale, and Mrs. Mervyn rose with an exclamation of disgust.

"Who is this?" she asked, "and what does he want?"

"Mr. Arlington!" gasped the lawyer, "alive!"

"Yes, alive," the old man said. "Nephews, how do you do? Glad to welcome you to Arlington. Sit down, child, and don't look so frightened," with a wave of his hand to Bessie. "Mrs. Mervyn Arlington, I presume," with a low bow to that lady. "The horrid old goblin has the honour to salute you



—the stuck-up fool bids you welcome to Arlington Manor. I have been a fool, but I am growing wiser in my old age."

He bowed to her as Samuel Good had bowed till it seemed as if he would touch the ground with his forehead, but it was lost on Mrs. Arlington. The consciousness of what it all meant to her and her husband had come upon her like a thunderclap, and she had fainted away in real earnest for once in her life.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

MERVYN ARLINGTON sprang to his wife's side with an angry look upon his face.

"You have no right to insult my wife, sir," he said; "however you may have chosen to play the fool for your own amusement you should show some little consideration to a lady."

"H'm! She has not shown much to me. She has favoured me with a good deal of her mind since she has been here; she has abused me as a servant and maligned my memory as her husband's dead uncle. I have come to think there is nothing like dying to teach a man what his fellows in life have thought of him; it has given me a lesson in humility at all events."

"You had no right to play such a trick; to let me assume that I was master here, and—"

"No right, perhaps," the old man said; "nor had you any right to act as you have done towards your cousin here. You have brought the *démouement* of the story about by your own pride and temper, Mervyn Arlington, and your wife has helped you with all her might. I thought her a very different woman when I fancied that it would be to the advantage of your cousin there to marry her. I am glad now he did not; he has done better for himself in every way."

"Better!"

The word came with withering scorn from the lips of the fainting lady; she was recovering consciousness and heard what was being said. There was an evil look in her eyes as she gasped it out and sat up on the couch to which her husband had carried her—an unlovely object enough, with her careful hair-dressing disarranged, and the water with which some one had sprinkled her making channels down her face through her rouge.

"Yes, madam, better," Mr. Arlington said, "much better. You will allow your husband to attend you to your apartment; you are still ill."

"I will not go until I hear how this vile cheat came about," she said, fiercely; "how you come to be alive when we had proof of your death—if, indeed, you are Mr. Arlington at all, and not some wretched impostor."

"I am no impostor, madam; there are plenty here who can testify to my identity; The vile cheat as you call it arose in the first instance through a blunder. Some good friend out yonder was kind enough to chronicle my death—I was uncomfortably near it at one time—and the knowledge of the report set me thinking. I had heard certain rumours concerning my two nephews, how the one whom I had disowned was quietly working his way to better things; I had seen something of it before—(eh, Bessie, my dear, you recollect me, don't you?) and his hand stole round to Bessie's and clasped it as he spoke—"and how the one whom I had allowed to supersede him was boasting everywhere of his heirship, and sparing no opportunity of blackening his cousin's name. I was in England six months ago, Mrs. Mervyn Arlington, and satisfied myself that all I had heard whispers of was true."

"It was mean, contemptible!" Mrs. Arlington said, spitefully, looking as if she would like to annihilate this suddenly resuscitated relation. "No gentleman would have done such an underhand thing."

"Perhaps not; but I never set myself up or a gentleman in your sense of the word. If you had known I was in England, and likely

to be near you, you would have been on your best behaviour, and I should never have known what a treasure my nephew had married. When the report of my death got about I resolved to seize the opportunity, and do a little masquerading as my own old servant. It has answered very well, and I am quite satisfied with the result."

"You have acted a mean and ungenerous part, sir," Mervyn Arlington said, rising and offering his arm to his wife; "it has amused you, doubtless, but it has given unnecessary pain to two persons at least who never injured you. Come, Julia, this is no place for us; the sooner we leave Arlington the better."

"I will not seek to detain you," Mr. Arlington said. "Nephew, you wanted a lesson and you have had one. You would have had a severer one had it been for the real reading of my will that you had been summoned here. At present your name is not mentioned in the document; it is for yourself to decide by your conduct and that of your wife whether it ever will be."

"Then all you told me, all you led me to believe, was a lie," Mervyn Arlington said, angrily. "You yourself said—"

"That in all probability you would inherit Arlington—I said that it might be. Arlington is mine at present, and I hope it will continue to be for some little time longer. Do not look so angry, Mrs. Arlington; remember, you have only yourself to thank for what has come about. And the next time you feel tempted to call an old man names, remember that walls have ears sometimes, and that unpleasant speeches have a knack of travelling. A good many of yours have come to my ears and helped me to determine upon the ruse I have successfully carried out. The real Samuel Good will be ready to attend upon you whenever you like to leave us."

The fair Julia flounced out of the room and burst into tears and wailings that would have shamed a child. Hers was an ill-regulated mind, and the fall of her airy castle was a dreadful humiliation to her. Her husband was detained by a touch from his uncle's hand as he would have left the room with her.

"Come to me in the library in half-an-hour, Mervyn," the old man said; "I shall have something to say to you before you leave. The lesson was more for her than for you. You are my brother's son, and blood is thicker than water, after all."

There was something in the tone that repressed the angry answer that was rising to Mervyn Arlington's lips, and he bowed his head in acquiescence as the old man returned to the party he had left.

"I have nearly frightened your wife into a fit, my boy," he said to his other nephew, who had been so much astonished that he had had no word for his uncle, and had only grasped his hand with a clasp of recognition. "But she knew me. Did you not, my little girl?"

"Not as Mr. Arlington," Bessie replied. "Only as—"

"As an inquisitive old fellow in a shabby coat, eh?"

"Something like it, I must confess," Richard's wife said, with a little laugh. "You frightened me then, sir."

"I think that dandy sergeant on the wheelbarrow thought I was an escaped lunatic; I was like the man in one of Dickens's books that 'wanted to know, you know.' I wanted all the information that I could get about Corporal Hetheredge without speaking to himself. If the fellow had been paid by the word for praising you, Dick, he could hardly have got more adulation into the time than he did."

"It was very good of him, whoever he was."

"Oh, he gave me his name and titles—Sergeant-Major Netley. I hope he stood treat fairly."

"The men were listening, sir," Dick replied, with a smile; "he had to."

Mr. Arlington turned to the lawyer and began a conversation with him about business, and Dick presently put in a word for his cousin.

"This has been a shock to him, sir," he said.

"My coming to life? I have no doubt it has. I have punished him for all he has said and done concerning you and me, Dick. I was an old fool to turn my back on my brave, light-hearted boy, and to think that his father's son would do better to rule here when I am gone. Never fear for him, lad; he shall not suffer, as I have made him think he will. But he shall not have Arlington. I think the thought of that painted, heartless woman ruling here would make my grave too prickly to hold me, the old goblin! Indeed, she'd find me one if she were mistress here. I should haunt her."

They all laughed, and the old man turned to Bessie.

"Will you come and live here, my dear?" he asked. "You will be *châtelaine* of the old home when I am gone. I should like the heir to be born here in the room where my mother lay with me in her arms. I should like to hear the echo of children's voices, if I am spared to see them, and to feel the loving touch of little hands upon me that were not all mercenary."

"Bessie shall come if you wish, sir," Richard said, laying his hand on his wife's shoulder; "on a visit; but I am a soldier, you know, and I must be at my duty, and I cannot spare my wife always."

"Ah, we'll alter all that," the lawyer said; "that is, unless Mr. Arlington wishes to continue the profession. Perhaps he entered for love of soldiering."

"I entered it from sheer necessity," Dick said, quietly. "Only a man who has hunted London through for employment and found none can tell what I went through before I took the Queen's shilling. If it had not been for Bessie here I should have gone to the dogs altogether; but she had promised to marry me when I had a home ready for her, and she kept her word, though it was only one room in the married quarters at Fullhampton Barracks."

"Ah! I heard a good deal about Bessie's room when I was at Fullhampton," Mr. Arlington said, caressing the bright head that was so close to his hand. "One or two Irish ladies about there seemed to look upon it as a sort of enchanted palace of tidiness and splendid furnishing."

"All the furnishing has been done by Bessie," Dick said. "You must come and see it, uncle."

"I will, dear boy, the day we purchase your discharge. I can't spare you to the Queen, my lad. She has plenty of soldiers, I have only one nephew."

"Two, sir."

"Yes, in blood, but not in heart. Leave me now you two, and send Mervyn to me. I can deal with him better by himself than when that wife of his is with him; I should say some very uncomfortable things indeed to Mrs. Mervyn Arlington if I were with her much."

Richard Arlington never knew exactly what passed between his uncle and cousin, nor did he see the latter again for a long time. He and his wife were driven to the station that same evening in the carriage with every token of respect, attended by the real Samuel Good, a little wiry old man, not at all unlike his master in figure, and vanished from Arlington not sorry to get away in the humiliation that had fallen upon them.

It may be inferred that they did not go empty-handed, for Mr. Mervyn Arlington set up housekeeping in a superior style directly afterwards, and his wife astonished her lady friends by a startling display of new dresses and bonnets, and talked of a season in Paris and further travels to Nice and Italy.

The new Mrs. Arlington, who shortly came to reside at the old house for a time, turned

the heads of half the gentlemen in the county by her gentle loveliness, and the little coterie at the barrack quarters missed her.

She had never been given to making acquaintances, but she had always been kind and sympathetic to her less fortunate neighbours, and ready to help whenever help was wanted.

There came a great day for the quarters, when an old gentleman and Bessie herself came to fetch Dick, whose discharge was purchased, and who gave to every one of his old comrades in the troop some substantial remembrance of his soldiering days; and another when news came of the birth of an heir to the Arlington name, when every household had something to remember the baby by.

It is only a matter of gossip now that the young squire, as Dick is called amongst the tenantry, was ever a soldier. He is his uncle's right hand, and virtually master of the place, for Mr. Arlington is very feeble, and he and his old servant can do little more than creep into the sunshine and enjoy it as they gossip in somewhat maudlin fashion of the time when they were abroad together so long. There is a nursery, full of children. The old man has had his wish fulfilled, and there is no lack of goodly Arlingtons to come after Dick and his Bessie.

There is no want of cordiality between the cousins. The old breach has been made up, and even Mrs. Mervyn Arlington has found that peace is sometimes the best policy. It is well-known that they are substantially remembered in the old man's will, and Mervyn says, "Perhaps, after all, it is for the best," for they have no children, and Arlington must have come to one of Dick's in the common course of things.

[THE END.]

**PERFORMING DOGS.**—When dogs first figured in London as actors they created a genuine sensation. The Roscii of the canine stage, two in number, were called Geler and Victor, and such was their popularity that they held daily receptions, and people flocked in hundreds to gaze upon and fondle these canine phenomena. Dog pieces became quite the rage, they even invaded the classic stage of Drury Lane, and one saved Sheridan from bankruptcy, when Kemble, Siddons, and a magnificent company of two-legged players had been performing to empty benches. The actors who owned the animals were called "dog stars." They always travelled in pairs; one played the villain, the other the virtuous individual; the latter was always attended by his faithful "dawg," who protested him from all the machinations of his enemy, the villain of the drama. At the windup the latter took "the seize" as it was called, that is to say, at a given signal the dog sprang at his throat, which was guarded by a thick pad, invisible, of course, to the audience, covered with red cloth; after turning round like a tetotum, and shouting "mussy, mussy"—they invariably so pronounced the word—he would fall and roll about in great agony upon the stage, the dog still keeping a tight hold until he was supposed to be dead. Shakespeare's plays in their time have been made to assume many curious forms, but *Hamlet* as a dog piece is most startling of all, yet this was actually achieved by one of these "dog stars" about five-and-twenty years ago in the provinces. He announced himself as "the only dog Hamlet," which he probably was, though the phrase, from a natural history point of view, was a little mixed. The play was very much abbreviated, of course; the Prince of Denmark in every scene was attended by a large black dog, and in the last the sagacious animal took upon himself the office of executioner by springing upon the king and putting an end to his wicked career in the usual orthodox (dog) fashion.

## GLADYS LEIGH.

—O—

### CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN Royal Lord Carew returned to Springfield Park he found that Lady Barbara had departed.

True to her resolve Mrs. Coniston had taken the young lady up to London, and resigned her into her mother's keeping.

She said very little respecting her interview with the Savilles, but Royal could guess that it had been an unpleasant one.

"I am very sorry to have caused you so much unpleasantness," he said, simply. "Indeed, when I accepted your kind invitation to Springfield I little thought of all the annoyance you were to have through me."

"Don't speak of that," said Mrs. Coniston, kindly. "I have been a harsh-tempered, sharp-tongued old woman ever since my husband died. I tried hard to believe in Barbara and her sisters because they were connected with him, but I have learned to read Bab's character pretty thoroughly lately, in spite of my prejudice, and I'm thankful your engagement is broken off. Even if you never find Gladys Leigh it is good for you that you are free from Lady Barbara."

Royal looked into her face with an eager question.

"Don't you think I shall ever find Gladys, Mrs. Coniston? The search will be my life's work. Do you really believe I shall fail?"

The hard features softened strangely as he spoke.

"I hope you will succeed."

"But you don't think I shall?"

"She was so little and tender," said the old lady, "and we didn't make her happy. I loved her; but I was afraid of vexing Bab, and so I never showed my affection."

"But—"

"Don't you understand, Lord Carew, the mere wish to live, the mere looking forward to happier days, will carry many a girl through cruel hardships and bear her up against a sea of trouble; but it seems to me that Gladys could have had no wish to live, and that in all the world she had nothing to look forward to."

Royal groaned. It was too true.

"If she is alive," went on Mrs. Coniston, with the fixed decision strong characters often show without any grounds, "she is in London."

"I think so too."

"Alone in London, nineteen and friendless, penniless and beautiful, what will her fate be?"

"I shall find her," said Royal, hopefully. "It cannot be that such love as mine will fail."

"If I know anything of Gladys Leigh you are the last person in the world likely to find her."

"Why?"

"Because she is very proud, because her code of honour is a very strict one. Remember, she knows nothing of all that has happened. In spite of Bab's angry words, Gladys will deem you still bound to her rival."

"True."

"It is woman's work," said Mrs. Coniston, with energy. "You will never succeed in it single-handed."

Royal sighed.

"My mother is much prejudiced against the Leighs; my sisters are mere girls. I fear—"

"You need not seek far for an auxiliary," said Mrs. Coniston, quickly. "It was from my house your Gladys disappeared; therefore, I am the fittest person to aid in the search for her."

"But you say she is in London?"

"I am sure of it."

"And Springfield is so far!"

"My dear Lord Carew, I am not a fixture like my walls and timber. I shall not in the least mind spending a few months in town.

Find me a nice furnished house, and I will come up with a few of the servants. There is nothing like being on the spot."

She spoke with all the energy of sixteen instead of sixty.

Royal jumped at the offer. He knew what a help Mrs. Coniston's clear brain and sharp eyes would be to him; besides, her assistance would give the search a propriety his efforts would not achieve for it.

He had no true title to search for Gladys Leigh; he was neither her father, brother, nor betrothed.

Mrs. Coniston, of all the world, was the right person to conduct the search. It was from her house Gladys disappeared; in point of fact, Miss Leigh was still legally in her employ.

Mrs. Coniston dismissed his gratitude at once.

"There's nothing to make a fuss about. I always liked Gladys, though, I own, I might have shown it more. She has a look of her grandfather."

It was the old romance, stirring up all the womanly tenderness so long hidden under a firm, severe demeanour—the romance that had had its ending more than forty years before.

"Her grandfather would be the first to look for her," said Mrs. Coniston. "He was a noble-minded man, Lord Carew, and as tender-hearted as a woman."

"We shall find her," said Royal, confidently.

"And you will take the house?"

"What sort of house?"

"Not too expensive, or I shall be cut off from making inquiries after my own fashion. I tell you Gladys is in London, in some populous, hard-working part. Find me a semi-detached house in any of the near suburbs. There must be plenty to be had."

There were so many to be had that Royal was perfectly bewildered, especially as none of them seemed fit for the heiress of Springfield.

However, it was Mrs. Coniston's firm belief that they had more chance of finding Gladys if they affected poverty, or, at any rate, made no display of wealth; so he finally decided on a ten-roomed, modestly-furnished house, quaint and old-fashioned, and certainly in a cheap locality, since it was within five minutes' walk of Kennington Park.

He was a little afraid that the place would strike Mrs. Coniston as fearfully bare and poverty-stricken, but he had no idea of the old lady's spirit.

She assured him she should be remarkably cosy, and invited him to dinner on the spot. Her own maid and the butler and housekeeper were the only servants she brought with her. The next-door neighbours were sorely puzzled at the *menage*, their imagination not soaring to the flight of a butler; but at last they adopted the theory that Mr. and Mrs. Simmonds were the proprietors of Woodbine Cottage, and Mrs. Coniston was their lodger, and this soothed their troubled minds.

But time wore on. Mrs. Coniston settled down in Kennington as though she meant to spend her life there, and Lord Carew paid her a visit two or three times a week, but nothing was ever heard of Gladys Leigh.

It really seemed as if, when she left Victoria Station, she vanished off the face of the earth.

It must not be supposed that the Savilles acquiesced mildly in their daughter's altered prospects. A very pompous letter reached Royal from the Earl about a week after Lady Barbara left Springfield.

Lord Saville expressed himself as at a loss to understand the rupture; his Barbara's health and happiness were alike in danger, and he was sure she would make any reasonable concessions her lover could demand.

Royal's answer was very short. The Lady Barbara, he wrote, had distrusted his word and cast a slur upon his honour. She had



requested her freedom, and he was too proud not to consider her words as final.

Lady Saville, who esteemed herself a skillful diplomatist, paid a visit to the Duchess, but she failed.

Royal's mother assured her her son was a man of strong will and great firmness. Once made up, his decision was unchangeable.

Cross-questioned, the Duchess declared she had never seen her son since the engagement was broken off; she was positive he had formed no other ties. Propose to a penniless companion!

Lady Saville did not trouble herself to reveal the companion's name and story. The idea was absurd.

Carew was the last man in the world to dream of such a thing. She and the Duke would not hear of it.

She hoped Lady Saville would not allow this *contretemps* to disturb their friendship, and that when she went to London for the season she might have the pleasure of meeting Lady Barbara, who would always be dear to her.

"Most amiable and gracious," was Lady Saville's comment to Barbara when she got home. "I am sure the dear Duchess knows nothing of Lord Carew's perfidy."

"Did she promise to remonstrate with him?"

"No, my dear; you could hardly expect that."

"Did she ask me to stay there?"

"Why, no."

"In fact," said Bab, with a malicious smile, "you extracted nothing from the Duchess but a few civil words, which cost nothing."

"I did my best, Bab."

"And failed shockingly."

"I'm afraid it's no use, my dear. You must have offended the Viscount past mending—such a pity as it is, too."

"There are other men in the world, I suppose," said Barbara, scornfully.

"But they can't make you a Duchess. Your papa's affairs get worse and worse. I don't think what the end of it'll be. Oh, Bab! I did think one of my children was provided for! Just mere consideration for your sisters should have made you more careful!"

"What's done can't be undone," quoted Barbara. "I'll promise you, mother, to accept the first eligible man who proposes to me. You can't expect more."

This story has other interests than to relate Lady Barbara's love affairs; but, to the best of our belief, although she has not broken her promise to her mother, she is Barbara Ainslie still. Poor Bab! she still expresses her resolution of accepting the first eligible offer. The drawback to this determination lies in the fact that since her rupture with Lord Carew she has received no single matrimonial proposal, eligible or the reverse—in our opinion she never will.

Royal Carew grew weary and heart-sick when the new year dawned, and brought no news of Gladys. He spent money like water in the search. He advertised in all the leading papers; he employed the first detectives in London, but it was of no avail. Again and again he heard of her movements; again and again people came forward to tell of her journey from Springfield, her arrival in London, but all the narratives broke off at one point—Victoria railway station.

One hope suggested by Mrs. Coniston did seem feasible—that Gladys by some unknown means had obtained Lillian Adair's address, and gone to join her, and till the family at the Vicarage came home Royal dwelt hopefully on this chance. But it was too soon dispelled. The moment Lillian returned, and found his eager letters, she came over to Woodbine Cottage, and told Mrs. Coniston she had never seen the fair face of Gladys Leigh since she left the Gables.

"Where can she be?" asked the old lady, looking trustfully into Lillian's thoughtful

eyes, as though she expected Miss Adair to answer a question which had puzzled the cleverest detectives in London. "Poor little Gladys! where can she be?"

"In Heaven," said Lillian, simply; "it is six weeks since she left Springfield, you say. She had very little money in her purse. How could she have lived all this time?—she who had no friends, and was too proud and sensitive to claim a stranger's charity. Depend upon it trouble and fatigue killed her, and she is safe in Paradise."

"I hope not. Don't look so shocked, my dear," as Miss Adair stared at her abrupt speech. "I hope Gladys will enter Heaven's Paradise one day, but I want her to have a few years on earth first to know how sweet love can make a life. Besides, Miss Adair, what will happen to that poor young man if he never finds her?"

It was Mrs. Coniston's favourite style of alluding to Royal. To her the Duke's son, the millionaire's heir, the handsome, stately master of Arle Priory, was simply "this poor young man," because he had lost what her sharp eyes told her he valued more than wealth or fortune—blue-eyed Gladys Leigh.

It was strange how Lord Carew turned to Mrs. Coniston for sympathy. It was at Woodbine Cottage his interviews with the detectives mostly took place, Mrs. Coniston making one of the quartet, and often astonishing the two London officials by her shrewd remarks and clear common sense.

#### CHAPTER XV.

The snow lay deep upon the Priory grounds; it was a very severe winter. The weather turned bitterly cold the week before Christmas, and had continued so ever since. Although the middle of February the white snowdrops had hardly lifted their heads in the borders; and Joan and Anthony, who having spent so many years at the Priory, surely ought to have been judges, declared that never since they came there had there been such a "hard" winter for the poor.

A year ago the severity of the cold would have meant a great deal to the old servants. In Sir Hubert's time, when every shilling was so hard to come by, fuel was a luxury; and oftentimes no fires were lighted, save in his own rooms and the kitchen. Gladys with a thick shawl about her would defy the cold, or if she felt unusually nipped she ran into Joan's domains and gave herself a good toast at the open range.

That was all over now; plenty reigned at the Priory now. Besides their own liberal board wages the old couple had an ample allowance to keep fires in all the chief rooms, to keep the damp from spoiling their decorations. Scrubbing and cleaning was performed by a woman in the village. It really seemed that Joan and Anthony had nothing to do but take care of the grand old place they loved so well.

It was almost seven months since Sir Hubert's death, and they had seen nothing of their new master. Mr. Lorraine had been down two or three times. From him they learned the name and rank of Mr. Brook's heir; and once in the early autumn he hinted to them Lord Carew contemplated bringing his bride home in the spring, but that was a long while ago now, and they had heard no more of a young viscountess. For the rest their life flowed on very tranquilly. The first of every month brought a cheque for their joint wages, and all debts incurred by them in the interests of the Priory were sent to Lord Carew, and doubtless settled by him in the same manner.

Prosperity had surely dawned for the faithful servants, and yet such was their fond, loyal attachment to their young mistress they would have given up their comfortable situation, their good wages, and easy life if only the old times could have returned, bringing with them Miss Gladys.

It was months now since they had heard of her—months since a line or message had come from her. Their last two letters were un-

answered, and as they sat by their bright wood fire the old couple wondered over their mistress's silence.

"It's not like Miss Gladys," said Tony, maybe for the twentieth time, "it's not like a Leigh to forget an old friend."

"She's not forgotten, bless her heart," said Joan, wiping away a tear. "Miss Gladys is not the one to forget those who love her. Tony, it's come to my mind once or twice of late she's in trouble."

"In trouble!" said the old man, wonderingly; "what sort of a trouble, wife?"

"I don't know; only, old man, if she was well and happy she'd write and tell us. It seems to me that she must be in sorrow, and that is why she's kept us so long without news."

Tony puffed away at his pipe.

"When was it we heard last, Joan?"

"Nigh on Michaelmas. You know she'd gone as companion to a widow lady near Birmingham, and sent us the address. I mind well how careful she was, poor dear. She sent us two envelopes with the address written in her own big, clear hand to make sure we got it down right."

"And that's five months ago?"

"Aye."

"She might be married, Joan. Miss Gladys was a likely lass, and there's many would be proud to mate with a Leigh."

Joan shook her head.

"She's not married, poor dear. She'd never have let anyone but me dress her as a bride—me that fastened her mother's veil and put the orange blossoms in her bright hair. No, she's not married, Tony."

"Hark, what was that?"

For a faint noise had fallen on their ears. Not loud enough for a knock; it seemed like footsteps, only not distinct. Again and again they heard it.

"Bats," said Joan, sagely. "They make all sorts of noises in old houses."

"I can't rest," said Tony, getting up and taking a small lantern. "It sounds to me like footsteps. Heaven help any poor creature out on such a night as this. My lord would never grudge even a tramp shelter in such a storm."

That was how the old pair always spoke of their present employer—"my lord." They never framed their tongues to say "the Master." To their minds that title was the property of Sir Hubert Leigh.

"I'll come too," said Joan, promptly. "I don't half like the notion of opening the door at this time of night—it's gone nine ever so long, but anyway two's better than one."

So together they traversed the broad hall, together they unfastened the many bolts and bars which secured the grand porticoed entrance. All sound save what they made themselves had died away now, and Joan suggested they should go back.

"We'll just make sure," decided Anthony. "I couldn't rest in my own bed if I thought any poor creature was wandering here."

He flung open the door, and he and his wife looked forth into the night. Tony was right—it was a fearful storm. The terrace looked one deep mass of snow, and the flakes still fell thick and fast. Only one object broke the general mass of whiteness—a dark bundle close against the hall, within a few inches of the door.

"It is a woman!" cried Joan. "Poor thing, maybe she had come here begging, and she was so tired she couldn't even reach the bell!"

Reader, she had come there to beg, but what she craved was not food or drink, charity or help—only just a look at the home where she had been happy, only a word of kindness from the old couple she had known all her life, only leave to end that life there in the old house where it had begun.

The worn, senseless wayfarer, the poor tramp who had looked like a dark bundle in the snow was Gladys Leigh.

Joan knew it the instant she looked at the

still, white form in her husband's arms; Tony had felt it by instinct as he raised her, but they neither of them spoke.

Joan made fast the bars in perfect silence, then she followed her husband and his precious burden to the room they had just left.

They laid her on the couch—they chafed her ice-cold hands in theirs—they poured brandy between her clenched teeth, and at last they had their reward. She opened her lovely blue-grey eyes and gave them a look which brought the tears into their eyes, so full was it of love and pain—of gratitude and sorrow.

"Oh! my dear, my dear!" cried Joan, bending over her, "why didn't you come to us before—us that's rich now, and happy only to hear your voice? Oh! Miss Gladys, why didn't you come?"

"I couldn't," said Gladys, in her faint, tired voice. "Dear old nurse, you know this is Lord Carew's house now!"

"He need never have known," said Joan, resolutely. "And I don't think he's a very bad young man, Miss Gladys. Me and Tony meant to hate him for your sake, but he's treated us that well, and his letters—we've never set eyes on him, dear—are that kind, we couldn't quite."

Gladys smiled wearily.

"He is not here?"

"Dear no, missie. There was a talk of his coming in April and bringing home his bride, but we haven't heard lately."

Two pink spots burned in the wanderer's white cheeks.

"I was so tired," she said, slowly, "and it was so hard. Joan, I felt I couldn't die among strangers, and so I crept back here. I meant just to look at the old place and go away, only I couldn't!"

They carried her upstairs to her own old room; to her surprise nothing in it was altered.

Then she remembered Lord Carew had said he loved her from the first—she found a proof of his words now.

Soon a bright fire burnt in the grate—soon the bed was made, with sweet lavender-scented sheets, and Gladys was laid there, her face whiter almost than the pillows, her golden hair floating over her shoulders.

"Joan," she said, catching the dear old woman's horny hand in hers, "you will keep my secret? You won't tell anyone I am here?"

"I will keep it with my life, deary! But, oh! Miss Gladys, that widow has a deal to answer for!"

"What widow?" asked Gladys, surprised.

"Her near Birmingham, Miss Gladys, that you went to live with."

"Mrs. Coniston?" said Gladys, feebly.

"Why, she was very kind to me!"

"But to let you leave her?"

"She did not know it. I ran away!"—a sob came to her voice. "You know I was always wilful. I thought I could earn my living by needlework, and so I went to London."

Her living! It had been well-nigh starvation, as her wan, pinched face testified.

Seeing Joan's troubled look Gladys caught her hand in hers.

"You must never blame Mrs. Coniston, Joan; and, nurse, I think it is for the best. Life has been very bitter work to me since I lost papa. I'm only just nineteen, and yet I'll be glad to die!"

Joan was sobbing bitterly.

"Don't," she pleaded. "Oh! Miss Gladys, you mustn't go to say such things! Only let me nurse you a bit, and you'll soon be strong!"

Gladys shook her head.

"You always said I was like mamma, Joan. Well, she had all your nursing skill, and yet she died when no older than I am now. She had a husband and a child to bind her to life—I have nothing!"

"Her heart was just broken, Miss Gladys; that's what killed your mamma."

Gladys might have said her heart was broken too. She only kissed her old nurse, and murmured,—

"Good night."

"Rest well, my deary."

"Oh! I shall sleep here. Oh! Joan, if you knew what it is to be at home; to know I can stay here till the end—the rest, the comfort of it!"

It was the small hours before Joan and her husband sought repose, they had so much to talk of. They could not believe their darling's danger, and Tony's one desire was to get a doctor as soon as daylight came.

"If Miss Gladys won't have Dr. Jewell, why there's that new gentleman over at Newton."

But Gladys, when questioned, was quite willing to have Dr. Jewell. She knew that since they parted sorrow had touched him—death had taken his gentle wife; for her sake Miss Leigh judged he would be faithful to the girl she had befriended.

And Tony was far too cautious to speak a word until he had bound over the doctor to secrecy.

"It's a matter of life and death, sir," he said, respectfully, when he was shown into the doctor's study, "but I daren't tell you till you've passed your word to keep the secret."

Dr. Jewell decided Tony had found some poacher in great extremity, and wanted his aid for the criminal, yet would not seek it without a promise his *protégé* should not be delivered to justice.

"Make your mind easy, my good fellow; my mission is to heal men's bodies, not to punish them for their misdeeds. You have my word I will keep the secret."

"Please, Dr. Jewell, she hasn't any misdeeds to be punished for—it's Miss Gladys."

"Gladys Leigh?"

"She came back last night," said Tony, still a little defiant at the Doctor's speech about misdeeds. "Please, sir, came back like a poor wounded animal that just creeps home to die!"

"Surely it's not so bad as that?"

"She says so, sir. She says she wants to end her days at home. My lord may turn us out, and send me and Joan to prison, but my darling shall have her way. It's not my hand, sir, that would drive the last of the Leighs from the Priory!"

"I am quite sure Lord Carew would not think of such a thing."

"He will never know it, sir, unless you tell him. Miss Gladys has but one wish—that no one should guess she has come home!"

She was awake when Joan brought Dr. Jewell to her room; the old servant did not make a third at the interview.

Gladys took the Doctor's hand.

"You have been in trouble," she said, sweetly, touching the wedding-ring upon his little finger. "Oh! Dr. Jewell, how could Heaven take her—so sweet, so true, so beloved!"

"She was ready," said the Doctor, gently. "Perhaps Providence thought I should think more of Heaven if my treasure were waiting for me there. And now, my dear, what can I do for you?"

"Nothing," said Gladys, with a sweet, sad smile, "except smooth my path to the grave! I have only come home to die, Dr. Jewell, and I am so weary and heartsick I think I shall be glad to go!"

"My dear child, and you so young—at most a child!"

She shook her head.

"I don't feel young, Doctor."

He made a careful examination. He asked a few medical questions, and then he told her the truth—she had no disease, she was just fading away; anxiety and sorrow, hard toil and privation, had worn out her strength until she had not sufficient to rally. The lamp of life was going out for want of oil.

"I expected it," said Gladys, simply.

"Now, Dr. Jewell, tell me one thing—will it be soon?"

"My dear, don't ask me?"

"But I would rather know. I have not much to arrange," here she smiled; "no will to make, no relations to summon, but I have one friend. I do not think I could die, Doctor, unless I said good-bye to him! Tell me—when shall I send for him?"

There was no resisting this appeal.

"Is he at a distance?"

"He may be abroad. I have no idea."

Dr. Jewell looked troubled.

"Then I would advise you to write at once. There may be delay in forwarding the letter, and—"

"He might arrive too late?" said Gladys, finishing the sentence, as though speaking of another person's death instead of her own. "I think not, Doctor. Something tells me we shall meet again. I think even if the Angel of Death had planted his hand upon my brow he must wait until we two had said good-bye!"

Dr. Jewell broke the truth to Joan and Tony very gently.

"It is too late!" he said, kindly. "Poor child, her days are numbered!"

"Can nothing be done?" cried the old nurse, weeping. "Oh! Dr. Jewell, will nothing save her?"

"One thing might," said the Doctor, with a strange, grave smile. "It would have saved her surely if it had come sooner, and now it might not be too late."

"What is it, Doctor?"

"Alas! Joan, what neither you nor I can give her—happiness."

"Tony," said Gladys, suddenly that evening, when she had been carried downstairs and laid upon a sofa, "do you ever write to Lord Carew?"

"I'm writing to him now, Miss Gladys; leastways, the letter's begun."

"I've changed my mind, Tony, about his knowing I am here. I should like to see him."

Tony stared. Had Gladys expressed a desire to confer with his Satanic Majesty he would not have been much more surprised.

"Finish your letter," said Gladys, gravely, "and then give it to me. I will write a line myself, and ask him to come. I do not think he will refuse."

"But, Miss Gladys," said Tony, stoutly, "if it's to ask him to be kind to us I don't want you to stoop to do it. I'd rather he was bad—I would, indeed, my dear young lady."

"I want to see him, Tony."

And the line she penned to her lover, putting it at the bottom of Tony's short rambling letter, ran thus:—

"I came here last night; but I shall not stay long. The yearning to see the old home was too strong for me. You will not be angry that I yielded to it?"

"GLADYS."

She had not asked him to come to her; she knew him too well. She knew his love for her was such that one line would bring him. He would read the unspoken request hidden in the message, and be with her.

Tony directed the letter to Woodbine Cottage.

"Though," observed the old man, disapprovingly, "what a lord can want to stay at a cottage for I can't make out."

But the words brought comfort to Miss Leigh. At least he was near—only a few hours' journey.

Gladys was weaker the next day—measurably, perceptibly weaker; but she made Joan get her up in the afternoon, and dress her in one of the loose white robes contained in the old chest, which long ago the old woman had pointed out to her as her mothers; then her golden hair was brushed off her face, and fastened in one long plait.

"Lord Carew will be here to-day," she said, with a strange insistence. "Joan, will you have a fire in the drawing-room?"

The fire was lighted, and when the room was warm Gladys was carried downstairs and



established on the sofa. The curtains were closely drawn. Joan brought a lamp, but Gladys waved it away.

"I always loved the firelight."

Her two old friends were in mingled expectancy and grief—the first for the coming of their stranger-master, the last for their dear young lady.

So fully had Gladys impressed them with her own certainty that they had sent word for a fly to meet the six o'clock train, and at the time the arrival might be expected arrayed in their grandest clothes awaited Lord Carew's coming in the entrance hall itself, bright with gas and fire.

"What if he should not come?" asked Joan, a little doubtfully, when she made a final journey to replenish the drawing-room fire.

"He is sure to come, nurse."

Before Joan had regained the hall they heard the sound of wheels dashing up to the door. Tony held it open with a strange expectant eagerness.

A moment more and Mr. Lorraine was on the threshold, leading an elderly lady, whose velvet and furs impressed the old servants greatly.

But where was Lord Carew? Why had Mr. Lorraine come instead of his lordship? Tony managed to put the question to the young gentleman with all due respect.

He smiled.

"My good friends, there has been a slight deception in the matter. I am Lord Carew, and as master of the Priory let me commend to your special care my dear friend, Mrs. Coniston. She has come from London in this bitter weather purposely to see Miss Leigh. For your young lady's sake and mine I am sure you will give her every attention."

And Gladys herself had spoken of Mrs. Coniston as too hard. The old lady had a double claim on Joan's heart, specially when she said to Lord Carew,—

"You will go to Gladys and tell her I am here. These kind people will take care of me."

Tony held open the drawing-room door. Oh! the host of memories that came surging on Royal's heart; but yet the sweetest thought of all was that he was true. For the first time in his life he could see Gladys without a pang.

Could he? Surely not! As he advanced, and a frail, trembling figure came forward to meet him, he knew the pang was still there, sharper than the old one. He had thought nothing in the world could come between them now; but what was that written in her bright shining eyes, her hectic cheek?

"Gladys, my love! my darling!"

She was back on the sofa now, and he was beside her straining her to his heart as though he had found its choicest treasure.

"I thought you would come."

"Come! I would have been with you the day you left Springfield, darling, had I only known your hiding-place."

"And you are not angry with me for coming here?"

"No, sweetheart."

"I felt you would not be. I knew it could not be for long. I should not have dared to write to you but for that."

"For what, my darling?"

"To say good-bye! Oh, Royal, it can't be wrong now; it can't be a sin against your wife. She will have you all her life, and I—there is such a brief space left me it couldn't be wrong to want to see you once more."

"Sweetheart," said Royal, with a choked voice, "it was not wrong. I am your promised husband."

"Mine!"

"Aye, child! Do we not love each other? What need of promises between us? From the moment Barbara Ainslie spoke my freedom I have looked on you as my betrothed. I have sought you unceasingly. Mrs. Coniston left her home, and came to London to aid me.

She loves you truly, though she may not have shown her love."

"I should like to see her."

"She came with me. Your note was so mysterious, I felt you might vanish away again if I did not bring some one of authority with me to convince you your place was at my side."

Gladys understood even at that moment his innate delicacy, his chivalrous care. It would not do for her to be his guest without a chaperon, so he had brought with him a lady whose name and standing would silence every idle word.

"I shall vanish," she said, gently. "But, oh! Royal, you have made me happy! You have made me almost wish to live!"

"Oh, child! why did you hide yourself? Why didn't you confide in some one?"

"I couldn't. I felt if I disappeared Lady Barbara would forgive you."

"She offered to," said Carew, wickedly; "but I refused to be forgiven. Now, Gladys, you are to get well for my sake."

She shook her head.

"It is too late, Royal!"

"Darling!" he pleaded, fondly, "I have loved you ever since I saw you. Cruel obstacles have divided us, and now at last we are together. Sweetheart, surely Heaven in its mercy will spare you to me for a little while?"

His arms were round her, her golden head rested on his shoulder, but she neither spoke nor moved. An awful fear came to Royal that death had stepped between them even in the moment of their reunion.

"Dead!" cried Mrs. Coniston, when he told her in incoherent words she was too late.

"Nonsense, Royal; the child has only fainted." And she was right; those sweet eyes opened again upon this world. And when Dr. Jewell appeared the next day he was not quite so positive that Gladys would fade with the snowdrops.

"I always said happiness would save her," he told Mrs. Coniston, "unless it came too late."

And now, reader, five years after Sir Hubert's death, we can truthfully assure you that happiness did not come too late, for Lady Carew, the favourite of Blankshire society, the darling of her husband's heart, is strong and well, and looks forward hopefully to spending many a year with the partner of her choice.

The young Viscountess is much admired in Belgravia, but it is at Arle she and Royal feel happiest. Old friends throng around them, the Fanshaws, Janet Pearson, now the fiancée of Lord Norton, and Royal's own family, who are delighted with his choice, and love Gladys dearly.

Apart from the fact that she is Mrs. Coniston's heiress, the old lady never went back to Springfield Park. She took care of Gladys till the June roses bloomed, and there was a simple wedding in the village church, and after the honeymoon she took up her abode at the Priory; and, as time passed, on helped Joan and Tony to spoil the infant treasures who came to Lord Carew and his wife.

She was happier at Arle than she had been anywhere since her husband's death, and she lived long enough to see the fourth anniversary of the day whose simple ceremony ended Royal's courtship, and gave to his love and keeping GLADYS LEIGH.

[THE END.]

HUSBANDS should make confidants of their wives, consulting them on their plans and prospects and especially on their troubles and embarrassments. A woman's intuition is often better than all the shrewdness and wisdom of a man; and all her ready sympathy and interest is a powerful aid to his efforts for their mutual welfare.

## THE HULA-HULA.

At the end of the feast finger-bowls were again passed round, and at a signal from the queen every one rose. The invited guests followed the royal party into the palace, from the veranda of which we could look back upon the scene we had just quitted.

Relays of natives crowded about the tables in procession and finished off the eatables. All were quiet and orderly, and when the tables had been cleared away the hula-hula began.

The missionaries object strongly to the hula, but, so far, have been unable to prevent it. It is an old native dance, and no festival, whether of marriage, birth, death or any other occasion, is ever complete without it.

First, four boys came out and stood expectantly in a row. They wore white jackets and trousers, laid around their necks and waists, and short ballet-dancer pink skirts made of paper muslin. Two men standing behind them sang, while they executed their steps with much animation and great precision. There is not much melody in the song; it is monotonous and sharply accented to keep the time. After them came a band of girls, who went through the same steps, only more awkwardly.

"Then, amidst a wild burst of applause, the 'Dandy' led forth two women, the crack hula-dancers of the kingdom. Strange looking creatures they were, with wild black hair twined about with yellow lais, dark, swarthy, heelless shoes, and fluffy feathers about their ankles, and wreaths of flowers about their heads.

The Dandy, who is their trainer or dancing-master, looked as though he had stepped off the boards of a negro minstrel show. He is a good-looking fellow, very tall and slender, and on this occasion wore a high crowned, bell-shaped, yellow felt hat, a glass in one eye, a dark green silk jacket with gold buttons, a gorgeous watch chain, tight-fitting trousers of striped watered silk and toothpick shoes. The ends of his collar stood up nearly to his eyes, in regulation minstrel style.

He came out, putting on his most elegant look-at-me-and-die airs, and played the jew-harp while the women danced. They began by slowly waving their arms about and undulating their bodies, keeping time to the music, and then gradually worked themselves up into a frenzy of wavings, stampings, and whirlings. Several times they would drop a wreath, or their back hair would come down, on which occasions they would stop, calmly put themselves to rights, and then take up the frenzy just where they had left off. It was wonderful to see, but almost impossible to describe.

EVERY man that has been long dead hath a due proportion of praise allotted him, in which, while he lived, his friends were too profuse, and his enemies too sparing.

HANDKERCHIEFS AND NOSES.—The gradual decline of the human nose is the result of the introduction and general use of handkerchiefs. The Romans never used handkerchiefs, and their noses, as we all know, were of the largest and finest type. Moreover, they were less liable to colds in the head than are people of the present time, and their noses enjoyed almost a sinecure. As civilization spread northward from Italy the inhabitants of the cold and variable climate of Northern Europe found that their noses were constantly called into activity, and as a consequence the average European nose fell below the Roman standard. Within modern times the handkerchief was invented, and a new and potent factor in the reduction of noses came into existence. Constant friction will wear away the hardest stone, much more the soft and cartilaginous nose. Under the friction of handkerchiefs the noses of the present century have steadily diminished, until small noses are worn almost as much as spectacles.

## FACETIÆ.

The baker is the only loafer entitled to respect.

If you cannot lick a man, be lenient with his faults.

The selfish man has most presence of mind. He never forgets himself.

"This is my sphere," said a happy wife, as she patted her bald-headed husband on the pate.

WOMEN as a rule are not profane, and yet a great many of them rip, tear, and darn—their husbands' old clothes.

When he was married he promised to cleave to her to the end. And the first time they visited the theatre he clove at the end of each act.

BOARDER: "I'm tired of eating cakes three times a day." Landlady: "I should think you would be. No one can carry all the load you do without being tired."

"Oh, mummy, dear, I do love you, oh, so much!" said the bad boy. "No one could tell you how much I love you; no, not even the biggest story-teller that ever lived."

SCENE, Water Colour Exhibition. Fair One: "I do love water colours so much more than oil paintings. You can always see yourself in the glass." She had a soul for art.

"Have you any poached eggs?" asked Jack Long of the man-waiter. "I don't know whether the eggs are poached," responded the waiter; "but I know the chickens is."

In the class-room—"Master B.," asks the professor, "what member of the animal creation shows the greatest attachment to man?" Master B., after reflecting: "The leech."

RATHER HIGH.—At a recent entertainment one of the young women present said, referring to her coffee: "I like to have all composite parts of my beverage both saturated and coagulated."

MRS. MUELVANEY (the Irish laundress): "In-dade, ma'am, and it's miserable I am. I'm just on my feet wid the pain in me back, an' Jimmy he's as bad off; he has a cough on um that sounds loike an empty bar'l. Cough for the lady, Jimmy!"

It is said to have been discovered by science that the wind always moves in a circle, but no explanation has been made as to how it happens that when the playful zephyrs seize hold of a man's hat they always make a straight shoot for the nearest mudpuddle.

"Look here, Matilda," said an Austin lady to the coloured cook, "you sleep right close to the chicken house and you must have heard those thieves stealing the chickens." "Yes, ma'm, I heard de chickens holler, an' I heard de voices oh de men." "Why didn't you get out, then?" "Case, ma'm," bursting into tears, "I knowed my old fodder was out there, an' I wouldn't hab him know that I'd lost confidence in him for all de chickens he could steal for a whole yeah."—*American Paper.*

Among a party who were visiting the beautiful country estate of a business man, recently, was a gentleman considerably interested in ornithology. As they passed through the grounds he accosted a labourer and asked: "Has Mr. B. any macaws on the place now?" Resting from his labours the son of Erin replied: "McCaws, is it? Begorra, I don't remember any of that name, but there is the two McGinnistes at work forninst the farm."

"BATTERSBY, my wife is almost worrying me to death. There isn't a day that she doesn't ask me for money." "I sympathise with you, Mr. Roberts. My wife hasn't asked me for money since we were married." "Oh, she hasn't, eh? Maybe she's dumb?" "No." "Or goes through your pockets while you are asleep?" "No." "Why doesn't she ask you for money?" "Her father keeps her. He keeps me, too."

When a young lady goes to church to exhibit her new sealskin she might certainly be called sack-religious.

At table (the master of the house, after turning a chicken over and over in every possible way): "How would you carve that bird?" "Hot," replied a guest.

"Did the deceased die under suspicious circumstances?" asked a coroner of a rural witness. "Naw, he didn't, he died in the water, under the ice."

In 1896: "James, just look at the register and tell me where it is fair weather this morning." "It is very nice in Italy to-day, sir." "Well, get the Ariel ready. Have dinner at seven sharp. Say I've gone to Venice."

"Hor enough for you, Ponsooby?" "Not very, dear boy." "You must be a salamander." "Not at all. Why, there was ice in our yard this morning." "Ice! Great Scott! How much?" "About ten pounds. The ice-man brought it."

On leaving the theatre Guillbollar goes into the cloak-room to get his topcoat. "Your number!" asked the woman in charge. "My number! Oh, just look in the pocket of my topcoat, I put it there for fear of losing it."

The "North East Debating Society," having dismissed the question, "where does fire go to when it goes out?" have got a new and more exciting one up. "When a house is destroyed by fire, does it burn up, or does it burn down?" There will probably be a warm debate on this question.

SAMUEL SLITH was a servant on an extensive milk farm. One day Mrs. Jones, the farmer's wife, went into the milk house and found Sam down on his knees before a milk vat, skimming the cream off with his finger and putting it in his mouth: "Oh, Sam'l, Sam'l!" she exclaimed, "I don't like that." "Ah, missus," quoth Sam, rather disconcerted, "you don't know what's good for yo' self."

A KEEPER in a handsome hunting-suit, was stalking through a wood, when he came upon a lovely young poetess who had gone out into the woods to commune with nature: "Ah," said she, "and you are a real hunter?" "Yes 'm." "And do you, as did the hunters of old, wind your horn?" "Well, if you means, does I blow the froth off'n my beer, I does."

WANTED A BETTER JUDGE.—Willie Spiceman, a twelve-year-old tough, was before a police-judge the other day on a charge of larceny. "Change of venu," said Willie. The oath was administered, and Willie passed back. "He don't know what a change of venu means, your Honour," said an officer. "One of the bums in the pen put him up to it." "Bring him back," said the Court. So Willie was again led up. "Do you know what you want when you demand a change of venu?" asked the Court. "Betcher life," said Willie. "What is it?" "I want to be tried by a better judge—that's what!" And Willie went off triumphant.

## WORTH THE MONEY.

It is said that the wine-cup has occasionally circulated among the legislators, and some have even achieved celebrity by this convivial disposition. Of one who has since achieved reputation as a lawyer the following story circulated among his legislative friends: He attended a ball one evening, and in the course of the festivities he became somewhat too joyous. Seeing this, one of his friends approached him, and advised him to seek his room and bed. The young lawyer said nothing, but with great solemnity took a half a sovereign from his pocket and thrust it into the hand of his friend.

"But I don't want money!" said the gentleman; "I merely suggested that you go to bed."

"Take it, take it," was the reply, in the blandest of tones; "I've charged ten shillings for a good deal poorer advice than that."

IMAGINATION is to love what gas is to the balloon—that which raises it from the earth.

"SH-H-H, child. Young people should be silent when old people are talking." "Then when shall young people talk, mamma? Old people are never silent."

FLATTERING COMPLIMENT.—"Have you heard Miss X. sing since she returned from her grand tour?" "Yes, in one or two concerts." "And do you think she has improved?" "She is much more agreeable to listen to." "How so?" "She sings fewer pieces than she used to do!"

A BEAUTIFUL woman, with artificially heightened colour, once said to General S—, "How is it that, having obtained so much glory, you still seek for more?" "Ah, madam," he replied, with more force than politeness, "how is it that you, who have so much beauty, should still put on paint?"

Mrs. YERGER was in a bad humour, her husband having gone to the club, and she gave her daughter a fearful tongue-lashing. Miss Yerger stood it for a good while, but at last she called out, "Mother, for goodness sake, give yourself a rest. If you keep this up much longer you won't have anything left for 'pa when he comes home." "Ma instantly ceased."

"MAY, my dear," said a doting husband to the lady that owned him, "if I turn Mormon and marry another helpmate, she shall be a Mary, too, for your own dear sake." "Be content with one Mary," said the loving wife; "in my opinion another would be merely a super-new-Mary."

HUMOROUS BREVITIES.—Bassale (to Gintop, about to annihilate a hot Scotch): "Here, old man, I thought you told me you had sworn off on New Year's?" Gintop (after hesitating suspiciously): "I did, sure enough. But when I remembered to-day that New Year's fell on Friday, I made up my mind to recall it and wait until next year. I will never begin a great reform on an unlucky day."

WHY NOT?—A census taker called at a house one day when all the members of the family were out except an only son, a boy of about ten, who was required to answer the questions put by the gatherer of facts. This he did satisfactorily until he was asked his mother's birthplace, which he answered he did not know. "Not know where your mother was born!" exclaimed the man. "Well, can't you guess?" "Guess yourself!" quietly answered the boy.

Mrs. SIDDOKS had many compliments paid to her talents, and some of an unusual kind. The Bar of England, as well as that of Scotland, presented her with a testimonial. But it is probable she was most pleased with the flattering homage paid to her by the Commissioners of Woods and Forests, who directed that the plan of Regent's Park should be altered, so that the view from her windows in Baker-street should not be interfered with.

SHE HAS THE LAST WORD.—"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Mrs. F—, after vainly endeavouring to pour hot water out of the empty teakettle, "how did I forget to fill it, I wonder! I'm getting to be a perfect simpleton. I wish I did have a little common sense." "But my dear," interrupted Fogg, "suppose you had. Do you think you'd know what to do with it?" "Do with it!" echoed Mrs. F—; "many things. I might want to be married again, you know, and it might save me from making a fool of myself a second time."

SHE KNOWS NOW!—"So you say you were once chased by Indians when you were out West?" said Ethelinda to her bashful lover, George. "Yes," replied George, "three of us were chased an entire day by a band of hostiles." "And you received no injury?" "No. We got away from them; but it was a pretty tight squeeze." "A what?" "A tight squeeze." "What's that?" "You don't know what a tight squeeze is? Well, er—that is to say—by Jove, you know—I—er—think it's about time you did know! I—er—will give you an illustration." And he did.



## SOCIETY.

THE second Drawing Room of the season was a great success, and so was the ceremony of laying the foundation-stone by Her Majesty of the new Examination Hall of the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons.

THE latter was, however, somewhat marred by an untoward incident. A man suddenly rushed into the room and threw a letter (a begging letter) into the Queen's carriage. The man was arrested, and there is no doubt he is only a harmless lunatic, and had no evil intentions.

HER MAJESTY left London on the 25th March for Windsor. The Court will probably stay there till the middle of April, when a move will be made to Osborne.

PRINCESS LOUISE, who has been busying herself with various charitable affairs, and has been consequently running about in all weathers lately, caught a severe cold and had to keep her room, but the affection yielded to common remedies, and her Royal Highness is about again, and occupying herself with the philanthropic movements, in which, like Princess Christian, she takes a particular interest.

THE University Club Ball at Edinburgh was, we learn, a splendid success, there being present upwards of 500 guests. Some of the dresses were exceedingly handsome, and the show of jewels was very splendid. Lady Grey was in black satin, with tunic of gold embroidery; Lady Leith Buchanan wore black and some handsome jewels; Miss Scott in white tulle, with scarves of moiré, beautifully looped up with yellow tulips, tied by the stalks with long green grass; Miss Buchanan in white; Mrs. Metcalfe in grey satin, with panels of old brocade on a deep yellow ground, and loops of brown, gold, and grey velvet.

ONE lady wore a petticoat of Oriental embroidery, partly veiled by a scarf of old Greek lace crossing the front, and looped at one side of the striped gold and white train; bodice of the same, and deep berthe and sleeves of Greek lace. A black tulle dress was very prettily arranged with a side panel and stomacher of yellow daffodils under a veil of the finest black tulle; real flowers, and a bouquet.

A MARRIAGE took place on the 18th March at St. Gabriel's, Warwick-square, between Mr. C. Horace Reilly, and Emmeline Julia, second daughter of the late Rev. Theodore and Lady Bouwens.

THE bride, who was given away by her brother, Major Bouwens, R.A., wore a dress of cream-coloured cashmere, embroidered with brown, over a brown velvet petticoat; bonnet of Italian straw, with brown aigrette.

EARLY in the afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Reilly left for Guildford, from whence they started on a driving tour through the South of England.

THE last reception at the French Embassy was a delightful affair. Among the dresses may be mentioned that of the hostess, Madame Waddington, who looked well, being attired in black satin much trimmed with jet, with diamonds fastened on the bodice and in the hair, and a pearl necklace; the Duchess of Bedford wore black satin and jet, with diamond ornaments, and a white feather in the hair. Lady Ella Russell's was a beautiful dress of palest pink broché velvet, trimmed with pink ribbons; the Countess of Cork was in black broché velvet and satin, trimmed with gold fringes, diamonds and a cluster of gold pompons in her hair; the Countess of Rosebery wore bodice and train of grey broché velvet in two shades, the petticoat being of pale grey satin.

THE HON. G. FITZROY, the heir apparent to the earldom of Kinnoull, by the death of his brother, Viscount Dupplin, will take the courtesy title of Lord Hay.

## STATISTICS.

RAILWAY ACCIDENTS.—The Board of Trade has issued a return of the accidents and casualties reported as having occurred upon the railways in the United Kingdom during 1885. The following table classifies the result: Passengers: From accidents to trains, rolling stock, permanent way, &c., 6 killed, 436 injured; by accidents from other causes, 96 killed, 693 injured; servants of companies or contractors: From accidents to trains, rolling stock, permanent way, &c., 13 killed, 81 injured; by accidents from other causes, 438 killed, 2,036 injured; persons passing over railways at level crossings, 58 killed, 21 injured; trespassers (including suicides), 305 killed, 126 injured; other persons not coming in above classification, 41 killed, 74 injured. Total, 957 killed, 3,467 injured. The totals for the corresponding period in the preceding year were 1,134 killed, and 4,100 injured. Personal accidents occurring on railway premises, but not on the permanent way or arising from the movements of trains, bring the totals to 997 persons killed, and 7,022 injured.

## GEMS.

PALE death beats with impartial foot at the hovels of the poor and turrets of kings.

THE smallest children are nearest Heaven, as the smallest planets are nearest the sun.

DIVINE love is a secret flower, which in its early buds is happiness and in its full bloom is heaven.

IF a man has a right to be proud of anything it is a good action done as it ought to be without any base interest lurking at the bottom of it.

LET every man take care how he speaks and writes of honest people, and not set down at a venture the first thing that comes uppermost.

THE disesteem and contempt of others is inseparable from pride. It is hardly possible to overvalue ourselves but by undervaluing our neighbours.

ONE of the saddest things about human nature is, that a man may guide others in the path of life without walking in it himself; that he may be a pilot and yet a castaway.

WHENEVER you commend, add your reasons for doing so; it is this which distinguishes the approbation of a man of sense from the flattery of sycophants, and admiration of fools.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

EGG AND COFFEE.—There are various recipes for preparing and refining coffee; the following is the best that has ever come under our view, and is available in all places. Procure your coffee fresh roasted and not too brown, in the proportion of a quarter of a pound for three persons. Let it be Mocha, and grind it just before using. Put it in a basin, and break into it an egg, yolk, white, shell and all. Mix it up with a spoon to the consistency of mortar, place it with warm—not boiling—water in the coffee-pot, let it boil up and break three times, then stand a few minutes, and it will be as clear as amber, and the egg will give it a rich taste.

A STUFFED LOIN OF MUTTON.—Take the skin of a loin of mutton with the flap on; bone it neatly; make a nice veal stuffing and fill the inside of the loin with it where the bones were removed; roll it up tight, skewer the flap, and tie twine round it to keep it firmly together; put the outside skin over it till nearly roasted, and then remove it that the mutton may brown. Serve with a nice gravy as for hare.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

THE thoughtless man bridled not his tongue, he speaketh at random, and is entangled in the foolishness of his own words.

IF to be true in heart and just in act are the first qualities necessary for the elevation of humanity, if without them all else is worthless, intellectual culture cannot give what intellectual culture does not require or imply. You cultivate the plant which has already life; you will waste your labour in cultivating a stone. The moral life is the counterpart of the natural, alike mysterious in its origin, and alike visible only in its effects.

As a plain garment best adorneth a beautiful woman, so a modest behaviour is the ornament of wisdom. The speech of an honest man giveth lustre to truth; and the diffidence of his words excuseth his error. He relieth not on his own wisdom; he weigheth the counsel of a friend, and receiveth the benefit thereof. He turneth away his ear from his own praise, and believeth it not; he is the last in discovering his own perfections. Yet as a veil added to beauty, so are his virtues set off by the shade modesty casts upon them.

SCPTICISM is not intellectual only, 'tis is moral also—a chronic atrophy and disease of the whole soul. A man lives by believing something, not by debating and arguing about many things. A sad case for him when all he can manage to believe is something he can button in his pocket—something he can eat and digest. Lower than that he will not get. We call those ages in which he gets so low the mournfullest, sickliest and meanest of all ages. The world's heart is palsied, sick; how can any limb of it be whole? Genuine acting ceases in all departments of the world's works; dexterous similitude of acting begins. The world's wages are pocketed; the world's work is not done. Heroes have gone out; quacks have come in.

WHAT IS GOOD BREEDING?—Genuine good breeding is simply a general walk in life which always avoids giving unnecessary pain, which sinks itself, and which is uniformly kind to all people. A factory girl in this sense may be, and often is, as well bred as a princess. The very height of good breeding is to be able to behave one's self properly, and there are millions of hard-working matrons and maidens who can do that, and much more than that. The flowers and the fun, the frolics and the fairy-like abundance of enjoyment which wealth can purchase, are often, it may seem, unequally divided. But good breeding, the art of always being frank and yet dignified, of patient self-control, of thought for others, of kindness to all, is as general as the gift of a heart. A duchess, in the best sense of the term, is no more well-bred than a milkmaid, if the latter has a gentle mind and disposition.

TABLE LINEN.—White damask is the correct table linen, cloth and napkins to match, with the gloss of satin on its shiny surface. The long-established, favourite old designs of snow-drop, fern, queen's household, &c., hold their own in this and are reproduced in less expensive fabrics. There are also some charming novelties in globes and blocks scattered over the surface, with wide bands for border, either with or without sprays, scrolls or the Greek pattern superimposed upon the band. The sunflower design, with seed sprinkled between the blossoms, is another novel device, and yet another has Arabic characters wrought on its snowy expanse. Lunch cloths are white, with coloured borders, buff, blue or red, and napkins come to match. Fine table linen is embroidered with a long, narrow initial, or else with the monogram of the lady of the house, the preference of the moment being for the former. Doyleys are of linen, fringed on the edges and prettily embroidered in outline stitch with some quaint or artistic design, or else they match napkins and tablecloth.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

L. S. T.—March 14, 1883, fell on Friday.

S. C. F.—1. A Turkish coin of no value, on account of its lack of rarity. 2. Only pass able.

C. R.—We know nothing of the preparation to which you refer.

T. Y. B.—There are no public schools for the purpose.

C. H. B.—No recipe that we can recommend to remove superfluous hair. Let it alone.

T. T.—The salary would depend upon your ability. Seek a situation in your own vicinity.

L. M.—To prevent pitting by smallpox, paint the face once or twice a day with glycerine.

APPRENTICE.—You can be compelled to stay, as the indentures can be redrawn.

MAGIC.—The marriage would be perfectly legal. We suppose the young lady was joking.

M. M.—Mingle mere in society. It is only bashfulness, and will soon wear off.

HENRY F. G.—We can find no copper coin of the date given which corresponds with the one you describe.

E. C.—We cannot vouch for the reliability of any firm.

G. M.—Both coins are valueless, as they possess no rarity, and consequently are not sought after by collectors.

N. C. Y.—Books devoted to the raising of poultry, cage-birds and pet animals, can be obtained of any good bookseller throughout the country.

A. G.—The necessary outfit for colouring photographs may be obtained from any dealer in artists' materials, at prices varying according to completeness and quality.

CHAS. H.—Refer the matter to a mercantile agency, where the addresses may, in all probability, be easily obtained.

GRAPHOGRAPH.—Purchase the ballad from a local music dealer, as want of space will not permit of its production here.

BETTY.—1. Each volume consists of twenty-six weekly numbers. 2. June 26, 1866, fell on a Tuesday; Jan. 29, 1844, on a Thursday.

M. C. S.—The gold coin is of no value to collectors or dealers, as it is to be found in all collections; the same remarks apply to the silver one.

O. Z.—The inauguration of the railway between St. Petersburg and Moscow, in Russia, took place on Sept. 1, 1851.

G. H.—An advertisement in one of the daily papers of this city would perhaps elicit the desired information.

EDITH.—Leave your hair alone; it is very pretty as it is. We know of no permanent dye that is not injurious.

R. C.—The ink can be got at any stationers. It is called blue-black writing fluid, made by a well-known firm.

MARY.—1. You probably mean consols, which would pay three per cent. Any stockbroker would transact the business for you. 2. It simply represents a great discoverer and his daughter.

ALICE F.—No particular style or make of paper is required for manuscript intended for publication, the writer using his own judgment in the selection of writing materials.

CONSTANT READER.—We cannot undertake to hunt up obscure words occurring in the Bible, or other books, but would suggest a thorough personal search by those asking such questions.

V. T. Y.—1. Ask the lady in polite terms to kindly furnish you with the address of her sister. No set form of speech is necessary. 2. Careful practice will improve both spelling and penmanship.

MRS. MARTIN C.—We earnestly hope that correspondents will refrain from asking us to furnish addresses of any kind, our rules strictly forbid their insertion.

F. M. F.—There is no known method of entirely preventing the growth of hair on the face. In order to keep your face in a presentable condition, either grow a full beard or shave daily.

M.—We can suggest no remedy by which the refractory moustache may be made to assume a symmetrical appearance, if constant trimming, oiling, and shaping with the hands does not produce the desired result.

T. R.—1. You are of that type of beauty known as the dem-blond, being a shade too dark to be classed as a blonde and not dark enough to be a brunette. 2. Spelling slightly faulty, writing very good.

C. S.—The addresses of the persons named are unknown to us, and even though we were in possession of such, it is not at all likely that their publication would prove of interest to the readers of this column.

D. F. H.—1. Get the picture framed, as that is the only way in which it can be properly preserved, and at the same time be kept on exhibition. 2. Bronze and blue figures are the fashionable mantel ornaments of the present day. A handsome clock forms a most attractive and beautiful centre-piece. 3. Visit an upholsterer's

shop, and there ascertain the materials best adapted as window hangings for your parlour. Being unacquainted with its size, shape, &c., it would be a rather difficult matter to give any trustworthy information regarding its decoration.

LETTY.—1. Religious questions are never discussed in this column. 2. By dint of constant, painstaking practice, it is very probable that you may be in time be classed as an expert penman.

G. R.—1. We know of no work devoted solely to the subject of patriotism. 2. The Latin motto, *Fortuna sequatur*, meaning "Let fortune follow," would be a most appropriate one for a graduating class.

NORMA JOHNSON.—1. The hieroglyphics enclosed in your communication are not decipherable. Refer them back to the author, who may, perhaps, give you a correct translation.

F. T.—Place the whole matter in the hands of a first-class lawyer, who will advise you as to the best way to proceed in the search for the title, deeds, wills, &c., relating to the estate.

A. B.—1. No recipe of practical value. 2. A good manure for household purposes may be made by mixing three ounces of gum-arabic and three ounces of distilled vinegar with one ounce of white sugar.

E. M. T.—Simple courtesy demanded that you, as the lady's escort, should offer her your arm, which she would doubtless have readily accepted. It was no time to stand on etiquette when walking on icy pavements.

READER.—There are several persons in this city bearing the name quoted, but none of them are engaged in the grocery business in the street mentioned. It would be a most difficult matter to trace the whereabouts of a man bearing such a common family name.

## HAPPY HOURS.

The world is made for every man  
A theatre of strife,  
Or hold where he may gather in  
The harvests of this life.  
Its toil and care on heart and heart  
Full heavily shall weigh,  
So grow, to lighten, just as he  
Shall use the passing day.

But when the light has disappeared,  
And evening cometh in,  
And darkness hushes through the world  
The day's perplexing din—  
If he his duty unto him,  
And to himself, has done,  
Then night to him shall bring her peace,  
The fruit of virtues won.

And in the circle of his home,  
With wife and children by,  
No daily cares shall mar his joy,  
Or cloud his gladdened eye;  
While pure domestic bliss exerts  
Its sweet and sovereign powers,  
To fill the charming eventide  
With life's most happy hours!

W. B. D.

P. P. F.—Invite the lady to accompany you to supper, and if she has a gentleman escort who has brought her to the ball, and consequently is bound to attend her, she will inform you of the fact; if not, she should honour you by accepting the invitation.

L. P. M.—As the hair does not amount to an absolute disfigurement, we should advise you to let it alone, instead of attempting to remove it by means of poisonous depilatory compounds or by the painful process of plucking out separate hairs.

GOMFION CUT.—Shields intended to protect dresses from perspiration may be purchased at any drapers. These serve the purpose admirably, and do away with the necessity of using medicinal means for the checking of excessive perspiration.

G. L. G.—Each number should cost one penny, whether ordered at this office or through a newsagency.

R. L. M.—1. Hat bands with monograms worked on them are the most popular. 2. Spirits of ammonia will remove grease spots from any fabric. Use the ammonia nearly pure, and then lay white blotting paper over the spot and iron it lightly.

H. V. T.—1. Castor oil and brandy will prevent the hair from falling out, if anything will. 2. No immediate remedy for general redness of the face. Trust to time to rid your complexion of its bloom, the loss of which you will then deplore.

J. G.—1. Our advice to your two young friends is to stay where they are for the present. They will not better their condition by wandering over strange lands. 2. Apply in person or by letter to some one in the trade.

ANNA ABBEY.—The idea that *papier maché* makers are writing to purchase cancelled postage stamps is a most erroneous one, but where it originated we are unable to say. Rare issues of postage stamps are bought by stamp dealers and persons making private collections. Like coins, they are only wanted when in good condition. No list of foreign and domestic stamps has been printed in this paper, for the reason that it would take up too much valuable space to enumerate the hundreds of varieties.

P. F. W.—The lines reading:—

"You may break, you may shatter, the vase, if you will,  
But the scent of the roses will hang round it still,"  
were written by the famous Thomas Moore, being found in the "Irish Melody," beginning:—

"Farewell, but whenever you welcome the hour."

GEORGE.—The Seven Champions of Christendom are St. George, the patron saint of England; St. Denis, of France; St. James, of Spain; St. Anthony, of Italy; St. Andrew, of Scotland; St. Patrick, of Ireland; and St. David, of Wales. They are often alluded to by old writers.

S. P.—The word "lentils" is mentioned in the 11th verse of the 22nd chapter of II. Samuel. It is applied to a species of pulse not unlike the pea in its general appearance. In Egypt it is still a common article of food, being dressed like beans, or stewed with oil and garlic, and forming what is called "red pottage" in Genesis xxv. 29-30.

T. G. S.—1. You might ask the lady verbally for permission to har, although there is no truer saying than "It's manners to wait till you're asked." It is very probable that if she desires to cultivate your acquaintance, an invitation to call at her house will soon be extended to you. 2. Remarkably neat penmanship, although it can be improved by a little practice.

C. T. B.—The manner of making an Arabian harp is as follows:—Of very thin cedar, pine, or other soft wood, make a box five or six inches deep, seven or eight inches wide, and of a length just equal to the width of the window in which it is to be placed. Across the top, near each end, glue a strip of wood one-half an inch high and one-fourth an inch thick, for bridges. Into the ends of the box insert wooden pins, like those of a violin, to wind the strings around—two pins in each end. Make a sound hole in the middle of the top, and string the box with small catgut or blue violin-strings, fastening one end of each to the wooden pins spoken of above, carrying them over to the opposite side, and securing them in a like manner. In order to strengthen the ends of the box where the pins enter, glue a piece of wood in the inside. Tune the strings in harmony, and place the box in the window. It is best to have four strings, but a harp with a single string is said to produce an exceedingly sweet melody of notes, which vary with the force of the wind.

H. F. H.—1. The laying of the first successful Atlantic cable was completed July 27, 1866. Cyrus W. Field, of New York, was chiefly instrumental in bringing this wonderful undertaking to a prosperous issue. Previous to this, a cable had been laid and landed in 1858, and greetings were exchanged over it between the Queen of England and the President of the United States, but the signals then used and the cable became useless. 2. Noted authorities state that the gipsies originally came from India, a conclusion arrived at after a most searching investigation of their language by such famous gipsologists as Rudiger, Pott, Bishop Heber, Richardson, Leland, Alter, Seetzen, Pottinger, Heyland, Dantowicz, Crofton, Smart, Borrow, Miklosich, Graffunder and Pachmayer. 3. Your stomach needs a tonic, administered under the direction of a trustworthy physician. 4. Saturday, March 2, 1837, 5. Mount Marcy, a peak of the Adirondack Mountains, reaching a height of 5,467 feet above the level of the sea, is the loftiest natural elevation in the State of New York.

AMT.—The system by which Mr. Banting reduced his weight has been described in previous numbers, but for the accommodation of yourself and others we reprint it. It has been tested by many persons, who claim that it is very efficacious, and at the same time does not injure the system in any way. For breakfast he took four or five ounces of beef, mutton, kidneys, broiled fish, bacon or cold meat of any kind except pork; a large cup of tea, without milk or sugar; a small biscuit, or one ounce of dry toast. His dinner consisted of five or six ounces of any fish except salmon, any meat except pork, any vegetable except potato, one ounce of dry toast, any kind of poultry or game, and two or three glasses of good claret, sherry or Madeira—beer, porter or ale being forbidden. For tea, two or three ounces of fruit, a rusk or two, and a cup of tea without milk or sugar. For supper, three or four ounces of meat or fish, similar to dinner, with a glass or two of claret. He states in his pamphlet that he breakfasted between eight and nine o'clock, dined between one and two, took his light tea between five and six, and supped at nine. Under this treatment he lost in little over a year forty-six pounds in weight, while his girth about the waist was reduced 12½ inches.

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ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 334, Strand, W.C.

†† We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

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